

# The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Universal Rights in a Divided World: The Human Rights Engagement of the World  
Council of Churches from the 1940s to the 1970s*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International History of the  
London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, London, September 2018

## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation traces the human rights engagement of the ecumenical movement through its most important institutional embodiment, the World Council of Churches (WCC). In doing so, it contributes to the historiography on human rights, on the WCC, and on religious internationalism.

The first part of the dissertation argues that from the 1940s to the 1960s, the WCC's human rights engagement was strongly focused on religious freedom and extended well beyond the United Nations. Scholarship on the WCC had addressed its advocacy against curtailment of religious freedom in communist states in some detail, a story that this dissertation retraces in relation to recent work on human rights, using the case of the Soviet Union. But the ecumenical movement also saw two other major opponents, Islam (especially in the context of decolonization) and political Roman Catholicism, which led it to lobby and campaign for religious freedom in countries including Indonesia, Nigeria, and Spain.

The second part of the dissertation considers the expansion of the WCC's human rights agenda. Over the course of the 1960s, the cause of antiracism invited piecemeal expansion of the WCC's human rights agenda. Only in the early 1970s, however, did the WCC develop a radically new conception of human rights, shaped above all by the need to respond to military dictatorships in Latin America. It sought to develop a conception of human rights that could be effective in addressing not only questions of political repression but also the structural causes underlying it.

Whereas the historiography on human rights has thus far focused on secular liberals and conservative Catholics, this dissertation brings into view the transnational activities of the predominantly Protestant ecumenical movement. The WCC's human rights engagement, which refracted but also impacted on the Cold War, decolonization, and secularization, represented an important strand of postwar internationalism.

# Acknowledgments

I could not have written this dissertation without the support, advice and friendship of many.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Piers Ludlow, who was always supportive and ready to help if need be, especially so during the final sprint. His wide-ranging knowledge of contemporary European history, the Cold War, and beyond, ensured that as the project's scope expanded, it remained firmly grounded, while his critical eye for argumentation and detail motivated me to work to a high standard. Moreover, his support in acquiring teaching and other academic work experience was invaluable, since these things helped me develop a more well-rounded and professional perspective on my research.

I would also like to thank James C. Kennedy, who pointed me towards the World Council of Churches, encouraging me to add to my interests in the history of human rights and nongovernmental organizations – in the form of Amnesty International – one in the relationship between religion and politics. Furthermore, Samuel Moyn's work has exerted a formative influence on my approach to the history of human rights – *The Last Utopia* came out just as I embarked on postgraduate studies – and I have benefited a great deal from brief encounters with him over the years.

I much appreciate the opportunity that writing this dissertation has given me to engage with a wide range of scholars. The literature on both human rights and the ecumenical movement has been developing rapidly since I started the project. Brandon Bloch, Nathan Kurz, Tina Reeh, Justin Reynolds, and Gene Zubovich generously shared their unpublished dissertations with me, John Carter Wood his *Habilitationsschrift*, and Marleen van den Berg her MA dissertation. Eric Arnesen, Robert Brier, Julia Dehm, Udi Greenberg, Christiaan Harinck and Bart Luttikhuis kindly provided me with forthcoming work, and Mario del Pero helpfully gave me insight into his research.

A number of scholars were kind enough to read a draft chapter along the way: Alfons Brüning, Peter van Dam, Vesselin Dimitrov, Bernhard Gissibl, Tanya Harmer, James C. Kennedy, Lucian Leustean, Johannes Paulmann, and Vlad Zubok. Zubok and Arne Westad acted as my examiners in the first-year 'mini-viva'. I also gained a great deal from participating in the *Journal of Global History*'s special issue on 'the Theory and Practice of Ecumenism', for which I would like to reiterate my thanks to the editors, James C. Kennedy, Justin Reynolds, and Elisabeth Engel. More informal discussions with many others helped to focus my work, among whom were Christian Albers, Arnd Bauerkämper, Clemens van den Berg, Stephen Brown, Boyd van Dijk, Tim Hochstrasser, Katharina Kunter, Konstantina Maragkou, Effie Pedaliu, and Esther Reed.

I received a great deal of useful feedback from presenting at a number of workshops and conferences: the LSE's International History Research Seminar, the LSE-Sciences Po International History Seminar, the International History seminar of the Institute for Historical Research, a meeting of the 'Blueprints of Hope' research group at Utrecht University, the GWU-UCSB-LSE Graduate Conference on the Cold War, the Annual Conference of the British International History Group, the Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion, the workshop 'Historians Without Borders' organized by the research group on 'Rethinking Disability' at Leiden University, the Columbia University-LSE Research Seminar, and the Gerda Henkel Academy at Villa Vigoni.

I am especially grateful to the Leibniz Institute for European History, in Mainz, for its continued support: first by having me at its graduate workshop on 'European History across Boundaries', then as part of its wonderful Global Humanitarianism Research Academy, co-organized with the University of Exeter, the International Committee for the Red Cross and the German Historical Institute, and finally, and most importantly, as a doctoral fellow for the last half year of writing up. Johannes Paulmann, Fabian Klose, and Bernhard Gissibl, and the rest of the Institute's staff, provided an intellectually stimulating atmosphere and discussing my work with them was of great help. Living with the other fellows at the institute made my stay not only productive but deeply enjoyable. These dedicated six months of (nearly) monastic conditions played a crucial role in allowing me to complete the dissertation the way I had in mind.

At the WCC's archives, I was welcomed and supported by Anne-Emmanuelle Tankam and Hans von Rütte, and by the WCC's librarian, Valérie Kim. The WCC's archives were the most pleasant I have worked in, and Anne-Emmanuelle and Hans's support was indispensable in managing the geographical and chronological scope of the dissertation. The work carried out by Dwain C. Epps, cataloging the archives of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, was likewise essential. While the WCC's archives supplied the lion's share of the materials I used, I also obtained many useful documents from archives elsewhere, including the Utrechts Archief and the Catholic Documentation Center of the Radboud University in Nijmegen. On an especially enjoyable visit to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, I benefited from the warm hospitality and knowledge of Roger and Amy Clark. Finally, I am very grateful for the opportunity I had to speak with some of the protagonists of the story: Dwain C. Epps, Baldwin Sjollema, and Theo van Boven graciously agreed to be interviewed about their experiences in the ecumenical movement.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, VSBfonds, the LSE's Marshall Institute, the LSE's Department of International History, and the LSE's Postgraduate

Travel Fund for their contributions towards funding my research. In addition, I am deeply thankful for the support offered by Lammert de Jong and Lester Ramsey, Sonja van Londen and Ed Berkhout, and Nienke Meeter and Kees Veling. Without these contributions, it would not have been possible for me to take the leap to London.

During my time at the LSE, I have been fortunate to work together with and get to know many great people. Working at LSE IDEAS helped to get away from the dissertation, to think about international affairs more broadly, and above all to be part of a vibrant team. Luc-André Brunet helped me find my way as part of the Cold War Studies Project, which Roham Alvandi directed during my final months there, and it has been a pleasure to work with Lindsay Aqui at *Cold War History* journal. Above all, though, it was the company and friendship of my fellow PhD students at the Department – especially Alexandre Dab, Cees Heere, Anne Irfan, Will King, Alex Mayhew, Tommaso Milani, Eline van Ommen, Michael Rupp, Isaac Scarborough, Max Skjonsberg, and Ian Stewart – that have made my time at the LSE one that I will look back on with warm memories.

Friends in Amsterdam and elsewhere proved that friendship can be sustained even when opportunities to meet in person are sparse. Knowing I could count on old friends – you know who you are, though I no doubt ought to have reminded you more often – no matter what made all the difference in keeping an even keel in London's sometimes choppy waters.

I would in all likelihood never have studied history, or human rights, for that matter, were it not for the place these subjects had in conversation at the kitchen table of my parents, Willem and Caroline. The curiosity my parents stimulated in me, the books with which they filled the house, and the sense they imparted that historical judgment is vitally important, all lie at the roots of this dissertation. Even from a distance, their encouragement and affection kept me going.

Finally, I am grateful to have been accompanied throughout the past years by my dear Ana, who reminded me that even dissertations are finite human projects, and that there is life beyond – a lot of it, in fact. Her commitment to a full life encouraged me to see historical writing as a way of coming to terms with the world, and her love and support sustained me when I most needed it.

# Abbreviations used

AACC – All-Africa Conference of Churches

ANC – African National Congress

AUCECB – All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists

CCA – Christian Conference of Asia

CCECB – Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christian Baptists

CCEQ – Catholic Conference on Ecumenical Questions

CCIA – Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

CCPD – Commission for the Churches' Participation in Development

CEC – Conference of European Churches

CLASC – Latin American Confederation of Christian Unions (*Confederación Latinoamericana Sindical Cristiana*)

CONAR - National Committee for Aid to Refugees (*Comité Nacional de Ayuda a los Refugiados*)

COPACHI – Pro-Peace Committee (*Comité de Cooperación para la Paz en Chile*)

CRA – Council on Religious Affairs

CSCE – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

FCC – Federal Council of Churches

FRELIMO – Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*)

HRROLA – Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America

ICJ – International Commission of Jurists

ILO – International Labor Organization

IMC – International Missionary Council

ICERD – International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ISAL – Church and Society in Latin America (*Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina*)

JCRL – Joint Committee on Religious Liberty

LWF – Lutheran World Federation

NCCCUSA – National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

NIEO – New International Economic Order

OAS – Organization of American States

PCR – Programme to Combat Racism

SACC – South African Council of Churches

SODEPAX – Joint Commission on Society, Development and Peace

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees

WARC – World Alliance of Reformed Churches

WCC – World Council of Churches



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# Introduction: human rights, Christianity, and the ecumenical movement

## Introduction

Gathered in Amsterdam from 22 August to 4 September 1948, the 351 delegates to the founding Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) contemplated what role Christianity ought to play in what seemed like a broken world. Much of Europe still lay in ruins after the Second World War. The use of the atom bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki provided an ominous sign of what a Third might hold. The onset of tensions between the former Allies, the United States and Britain on the one hand, the Soviet Union on the other, meant that such a war was already becoming imaginable. In this context, the Assembly discerned a spiritual crisis. Its Section IV, on ‘The Church and the International Disorder’, concluded that ‘[e]xhaustion and disillusionment have combined with spiritual apathy to produce a moral vacuum which will be filled, either by Christian faith or by despair or even hatred. Men are asking in fear and dismay what the future holds.’<sup>1</sup> But the establishment of the WCC offered hope: ‘a fellowship is being developed which rises above those barriers of race, colour, class and nation that now set men against each other in conflict’.<sup>2</sup> One major way in which this Christian fellowship could contribute to peace and reconciliation was by calling for the protection of human rights, a concept that had made it into the foundations of the recently established United Nations. Lobbying by churches associated with the WCC had contributed to this outcome, and at the time of the Amsterdam Assembly, the drafting of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights was entering its final stages.<sup>3</sup> The WCC was therefore umbilically connected to the postwar rise of human rights – but its engagement with the concept was shaped by distinctly Christian concerns.

The WCC had its roots before the Second World War. The decision to establish the organization had already been made at the seminal World Conference on Church, Community and State, held at Oxford from 12 to 26 July 1937, but the outbreak of war had meant that only a germinal

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<sup>1</sup> W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: The Official Report* (London: SCM Press, 1949) 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>3</sup> John Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

organization, headquartered in Geneva, existed until 1948. Building on a series of conferences organized during the first half of the twentieth century, the WCC represented the most important institutional embodiment of the ecumenical movement. This predominantly Protestant network sought to manifest the unity of Christianity – in ecumenists’ view, this essential unity was given by God – in both doctrine and social action. The two principal organizations of the interwar ecumenical movement which came together in the WCC represented these two aspects: the World Conference of Faith and Order, and the Universal Christian Council of Life and Work had in the interwar decades provided a platform for churches of different denominations. The WCC was also closely linked to a third strand of ecumenism, the International Missionary Council (IMC), which represented the missionary movement and would be integrated into the WCC in 1961.<sup>4</sup> With 147 different churches represented at the Amsterdam Assembly, from 44 countries, though almost all Protestant and from the West, the newly established WCC boasted a constituency that numbered in the many dozens of millions.<sup>5</sup> It attracted clergy and laypeople of significant religious and social stature, enabling it to exert influence in both the spiritual and political realms. As the Dutch ecumenist and jurist Baron F.M. van Asbeck wrote in preparation for the Amsterdam Assembly, ‘[t]he ecumenical leaven should revolutionize the international world’.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the Amsterdam Assembly’s Section IV called on churches to support the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its development into an enforceable ‘International Bill of Rights’. The churches were also urged to ‘press for freedom of speech and expression, of association and assembly, the rights of the family, of freedom from arbitrary arrest, as well as those other rights which the true freedom of man requires’. Moreover, the churches should ‘support a fuller realisation of human freedom through social legislation’, ‘protest against the expulsion of minorities’, and ‘oppose enforced segregation on grounds of race and colour’.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the Assembly appealed for support of ‘other conventions on human rights, such as those on Genocide and Freedom of Information and the Press’.<sup>8</sup> But this laundry list of postwar concerns remained superficial in

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<sup>4</sup> For an excellent historical overview, see Justin Reynolds, ‘Against the World: International Protestantism and the Ecumenical Movement between Secularization and Politics’ (PhD dissertation: Columbia University, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004) 109.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in James C. Kennedy, ‘Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationals’, in Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, eds., *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 292-318, on 296.

<sup>7</sup> Visser ‘t Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly*, 93-94. On the work of Section IV, see *inter alia* Matti Peiponen, *Ecumenical Action in World Politics: The Creation of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCLA), 1945-1949* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2012) 291-292.

<sup>8</sup> Visser ‘t Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly*, 96.

comparison to the subject on which the Assembly went so far as to adopt an entire separate text: ‘A Declaration on Religious Liberty’.

This Declaration called for attention to religious freedom as an international concern: ‘An essential element in a good international order is freedom of religion. This is an implication of the Christian faith and of the world-wide nature of Christianity.’ It also made clear that the WCC grounded religious and other human rights in a conception of personal, natural rights, meant as a bulwark against state encroachment: ‘The nature and destiny of man by virtue of his creation, redemption and calling, and man’s activities in family, state and culture establish limits beyond which the government cannot with impunity go.’ Consequently, the Declaration enumerated four sets of rights:

- ‘1. Every person has the right to determine his own faith and creed. (...)
2. Every person has the right to express his religious beliefs in worship, teaching and practice, and to proclaim the implications of his beliefs for relationships in a social or political community. (...)
3. Every person has the right to associate with others and to organise with them for religious purposes. (...)
4. Every religious organisation, formed or maintained by action in accordance with the rights of individual persons, has the right to determine its policies and practices for the accomplishment of its chosen purposes.’<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after the Amsterdam Assembly, the IMC also adopted this Declaration, enshrining it as the basis for both church and missionary advocacy of religious liberty in the postwar decades. A few months later, on 10 December 1948, the United Nations adopted its Universal Declaration, which included a provision on religious freedom that had been shaped according to ecumenical desiderata. Its Article 18 read:

‘Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.’<sup>10</sup>

This statement provided the ecumenical movement with a vital secular instrument for promoting its conception of religious freedom. The representative body of both WCC and IMC, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), set about this task, in collaboration with its contacts around the world.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 97-99 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>10</sup> Linde Lindkvist, ‘The Politics of Article 18: Religious Liberty in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, *Humanity*, 4, 3 (2014) 429-447, on 429.

Taking this milestone in the history of human rights and the ecumenical movement as its starting point, this dissertation seeks to answer the question of how the WCC's human rights engagement developed from the 1940s to the 1970s. Its thesis is that while the WCC's advocacy of human rights was marked by continuity from the 1940s to the 1960s, in the 1970s it adopted a radically different stance from the one outlined above. This shift entailed at least four significant changes. The WCC initially focused heavily on religious freedom, above all that of its member churches and coreligionists, whereas its approach to human rights in the 1970s was capacious, emphatically including social, economic, and collective rights. Its initial insistence on a natural law understanding of rights, which stressed universality, was replaced by a more contextualist view. Furthermore, whereas in the 1940s, the WCC saw human rights primarily as a secular instrument, in the 1970s it sought to integrate the concept more fully into its theological thinking. And finally, whereas its representatives in the 1940s were wedded to a strategy of elite lobbying of governments, international institutions, and religious leaders, the WCC in the 1970s offered direct support to groups working for 'liberation'. By providing the most extensive archival examination yet of both phases in the WCC's human rights engagement, the dissertation situates it as an important strand in the postwar history of human rights and (religious) internationalism.

The dissertation aims to make contributions to three historiographical subfields. First among these is the historiography on human rights. While in recent years the genealogy of human rights in the twentieth century has been debated vociferously, most notably in response to Samuel Moyn's *The Last Utopia* (2010), historians have tended to focus on the role of states and secular nongovernmental organizations. Religious actors have only recently begun to receive greater attention, but much of this has been devoted to Catholics, often in the context of the late 1930s to 1940s.<sup>11</sup> The fragmentation of non-Catholic Christianity can help explain the absence of overarching accounts of Protestant human rights engagement. Studying the WCC, however, allows a unique window into transnational Protestantism. Insofar as the WCC and the wider ecumenical movement has been studied, scholars have mostly left unexamined the development of their human rights engagement from the 1940s onward. As this dissertation illustrates, in the realm of religious freedom, the ecumenical movement was in fact highly active. Moreover, recent scholarship has tended to focus either on the 1940s or the

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<sup>11</sup> An excellent recent 'Special Forum on Christianity and Rights', in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79, 3 (2018), has given a renewed impetus to the study of Christian human rights, across the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, but most contributions focus on Catholics. I briefly engage with several of the articles in chapter 3 and the conclusions.

1970s, while studies tracing continuities and discontinuities across the postwar decades are relatively scarce.

Although excellent work on the ecumenical movement has recently been carried out, the historiography on the WCC still lacks an authoritative account. Much of the literature on the subject is made up of official histories and the accounts of participants, which, although often useful or insightful, have tended to lack critical distance or a basis in published and especially in unpublished sources.<sup>12</sup> While the WCC's human rights engagement has been the focus of a number of studies, these have focused on a limited number of episodes, and with hardly any attention paid to the 1950s and 1960s, or to human rights beyond the question of Eastern Europe. This dissertation thus makes an important contribution chronologically as well as thematically, and in so doing aims to broaden the future agenda for studies of the WCC. Furthermore, the dissertation's extensive use of archival materials relating to a variety of cases gives it both greater width and depth than most previous accounts. In applying categories of analysis derived from the historiography on human rights, and that of international history more broadly, it also seeks to connect the WCC's history (and the existing scholarship on the subject) to wider historiographical debates than a church historical or theological focus allows for.

Thirdly, the dissertation is also a contribution to the history of (religious) internationalism and transnational nongovernmental organizations. The history of such movements and organizations has received increasing attention in recent years.<sup>13</sup> As an ecclesiastical organization with member churches and a network across borders, the WCC sat in the grey area between the 'international' and the 'transnational' (while at the same time, the importance of the 'national' or even the 'local' should not be overlooked). The WCC has often been studied by church historians as primarily 'a sphere for contacts, exchanges, and communication', but as Elisabeth Engel, James C. Kennedy, and Justin Reynolds have recently argued, the ecumenical movement also furnished 'specific expressions of

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 1: 1517-1948* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993; 1st edn. 1954); Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 2: 1948-1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993; 1st edn. 1970); John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and George Tsetsis, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 3: 1968-2000* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004); Darril Hudson, *The World Council of Churches in International Affairs* (Leighton Buzzard: The Faith Press [for the Royal Institute of International Affairs], 1977); Darril Hudson, *The Ecumenical Movement in World Affairs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson [for the London School of Economics & Political Science], 1969); Ans J. van der Bent, *Christian Response in a World of Crisis: A Brief History of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs* (Geneva: WCC, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Jessica Reinisch, 'Introduction: Agents of Internationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 25, 2 (2016) 195-205.

power that shaped colonial politics, decolonization movements, international regimes of aid and development, and human rights institutions'.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, they stress its distinctly Christian nature, which represented an important departure in Christian ideology:

'Through the ecumenical movement, nineteenth-century ideologies of expansion by conversion gave way to a new universalist ideology, in which Christianity would conquer not territory but the centrifugal forces that lay at the root of the modern, secular temper: nationalism, class struggle, sectarian conflict, and racism.'<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the WCC straddled the border between the religious and the secular, influencing the framing of postwar international order in ways just now being recognized.

The remainder of this introduction discusses the historiography relevant to the dissertation, starting with a brief survey of the recent historiography on human rights and the place of religion in it. It then presents overviews of the historiography pertaining to the ecumenical movement and human rights in the 1940s and 1970s, respectively. The final section lays out the dissertation's structure, before dealing with methodological considerations, including the limitations of the study and a note on sources.

## The recent historiography on human rights and the absence of religion

The burgeoning field of human rights history has reached a size and complexity where no historiographical summary can do it full justice. What can be said is that at the heart of most recent works is a commitment to historicizing human rights, in response to earlier accounts, which tended to approach the subject ahistorically.<sup>16</sup> In a much-quoted 2004 essay, several years ahead of the current surge in interest, Kenneth Cmiel called for historians to attend 'to the nuances of political language in different cultural settings' in studying human rights and to recover the 'grime of past politics'.<sup>17</sup> In 2009, Jan Eckel put forward his approach of the history of human rights as discontinuous, polycentric, and concerned with changes in both the form and content of the concept.<sup>18</sup> Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann

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<sup>14</sup> Elisabeth Engel, James Kennedy, and Justin Reynolds, 'Editorial – the Theory and Practice of Ecumenism: Christian Global Governance and the Search for World Order, 1900-80', *Journal of Global History*, 13, 2 (2018) 157-164, on 160.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>16</sup> Aim has most often been taken at two 'early' historical studies: Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) and Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Cmiel, 'The Recent History of Human Rights', *The American Historical Review*, 109, 1 (2004) 117-135, quote on 120-1.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Eckel, 'Utopie der Moral, Kalkül der Macht. Menschenrechte in der globalen Politik seit 1945', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 49 (2009) 437-484, on 439.

pleaded for a genealogical approach to human rights, which would avoid taking an *a priori* stance on their moral value and instead trace the different ways in which the concept was used and given meaning by different actors at different times.<sup>19</sup> In the most influential intervention, Samuel Moyn, in his book *The Last Utopia* (2010), argued that ‘human rights have to be treated as a human cause, rather than one with the long-term inevitability and moral self-evidence that common sense assumes’.<sup>20</sup> An overview by Barbara Keys and Roland Burke echoes this ambition, as they conceive of human rights history ‘not as a linear and unitary narrative of progress in the face of resistance but rather as a series of discontinuities, intersections, and appropriations in which the scope and content of the term itself was always an area of contestation’.<sup>21</sup> Earlier inquiries into natural rights, which in Brian Tierney’s view are synonymous with human rights, have focused on discovering the deep historical roots of human rights.<sup>22</sup> Scholars working in this vein have identified antecedents or ‘origins’ of human rights in Enlightenment thought and the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, the Protestant reformation, medieval canon law, classical Stoicism, and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> While not denying the existence of such antecedents, the recent literature has instead focused on tracing the changing meaning of the concept of human rights in the context of more recent history.

The focus in the recent debate has been on the twentieth century, and particularly on the period of the 1940s to the 1970s. Whereas established narratives had foregrounded the 1940s as the site of a human rights ‘revolution’, owing above all to the creation of the United Nations and its promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)<sup>24</sup>, Moyn, Eckel, and others argued

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<sup>19</sup> Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ‘Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights’, in *ibid.*, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 1-26, quote on 2-4.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) 9.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Keys and Roland Burke, ‘Human rights’, in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 486-502, quote on 486.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Tierney, ‘The Idea of Natural Rights – Origins and Persistence’, *Northwestern Journal of International Human Rights*, 2, 1 (2004) 1-13, on 1.

<sup>23</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007); Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law and Church Law* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997); John Witte, *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For the application of such scholarship to the theme of Christianity and human rights, see also Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, ‘Modern Protestant Developments in Human Rights’, in John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, eds., *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 155-172; John Witte, Jr. and Justin J. Latterell, ‘Christianity and Human Rights: Past Contributions and Future Challenges’, *Journal of Law and Religion*, 30, 3 (2015) 353-385.

<sup>24</sup> Apart from Lauren and Ishay, cited above, e.g. Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001); and for an older account, Louis Henkin, *The Age of Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).



that in fact, a decisive ‘breakthrough’ of human rights only occurred in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> In Moyn’s view, what was most significant about this was that it entailed the rise of a form of ‘antipolitics’, minimalist and focused on a limited set of civil and political rights, rather than radical in its commitments, as opposed to earlier ‘utopias’ such as reform socialism. Amnesty International and concern for dissidents and opposition figures in Eastern Europe and Latin America galvanized activists who desired to transcend the Cold War and opposed state authoritarianism. This movement could only come about, Moyn argued, as more radical ones receded. Noting in passing the significance of Christianity in the 1940s, Moyn wrote that in the 1970s, religion was far less important:

‘Without gainsaying the relevance of Christian forces even in the 1970s, what matters in the long view is that they had much less of a propriety claim on human rights than in the 1940s, when Christianity counted so much in both defining and marginalizing the idea. The world had changed since then. Progressive Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, had exploded around the world without clear connection to human rights.’<sup>26</sup>

While historiographical debate at first focused on identifying competing ‘breakthrough’ moments, as Moyn has subsequently written, the question of chronology served ‘merely as a proxy for assessing what sociohistorical conditions made the contemporary enterprise of international human rights imaginable and plausible’, specifically with respect to ‘the content of norms’, their ‘geographical zone of application’, and the ‘prominence and believability of human rights as a language of political ideology, maneuvering, and struggle’.<sup>27</sup> In line with this, over time, the historiography has begun to move beyond the focus on identifying ‘breakthrough’ moments in a single overarching history of ‘human rights’. A recent assessment by Burke and Jensen concludes that instead, scholarship is shifting ‘toward a constellation of “human rights histories”, with complementarity of global, regional and thematic accounts’.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in response to a challenge by Hoffmann, who argued for the 1990s as the real ‘breakthrough’ era, Moyn has written that this innovation might be ‘the last interesting

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<sup>25</sup> Moyn, *The Last Utopia*; Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). Cf. Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), which contains contributions aligned with both positions.

<sup>26</sup> Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 166.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Moyn, ‘Substance, Scale, and Salience: The Recent Historiography of Human Rights’, *Annu. Rev. Law. Soc. Sci.*, 8 (2012) 123-140, on 124-125.

<sup>28</sup> Steven L.B. Jensen and Roland Burke, ‘From the Normative to the Transnational: Methods in the Study of Human Rights History’, in Bård A. Andreassen, Hans-Otto Sano, and Siobhán McInerney Lankford, eds., *Research Methods in Human Rights: A Handbook* (Cheltenham, PA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017) 117-140, on 119.

move available in the game of human rights history, at least until the rules are changed in ways no one currently anticipates'.<sup>29</sup>

But this evaluation belies the ways in which the field has, through its increasing diversity, not only widened but connected to other areas of inquiry. For instance, while the scholarship still focuses heavily on Western, especially American, actors, it has expanded geographically and linguistically.<sup>30</sup> A particularly pronounced challenge in this respect has come from scholars working on decolonization. While anticolonial movements were excluded by Moyn from the genealogy of human rights in its 1970s guise, scholars such as Roland Burke, Meredith Terretta, Steven Jensen, Fabian Klose, and Daniel Maul, have demonstrated the agency of actors from the global South during the process of decolonization.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, as Mark Philip Bradley's recent work has demonstrated, new methodological approaches, drawing inspiration from sources such as literary theory, can throw new light even on a field as well-worn as human rights and the United States.<sup>32</sup>

A theme that initially received scant attention in the recent historiography was that of religion.<sup>33</sup> As Moyn recognized in *The Last Utopia*, in the existing work on human rights and non-governmental organizations, it 'seems rather clear that blinders continue to exclude the early, striking, and persisting relevance of religious groups among NGOs generally'.<sup>34</sup> Several factors help explain this. David A. Hollinger has noted that, in the American context at least, the literature on 'ecumenical Protestantism' has remained 'fewer in number, narrower in scope, and lower in professional visibility' compared to that on 'evangelical Protestantism', which became dominant in American life from the

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<sup>29</sup> Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Human Rights and History', *Past and Present*, 232, 2 (2016) 279-310; Samuel Moyn, 'The End of Human Rights History', *Past and Present*, 233, 1 (2016) 307-322, on 308.

<sup>30</sup> For recent overviews see Robert Brier, 'Beyond the Quest for a "Breakthrough": Reflections on the Recent Historiography on Human Rights', *European History Yearbook*, 16 (2015) 155-73; Fabian Klose, 'Human Rights for and against Empire – Legal and Public Discourses in the Age of Decolonisation', *Journal of the History of International Law*, 18 (2016) 317-338.

<sup>31</sup> Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Jan Eckel, 'Human Rights and Decolonization: New Perspectives and Open Questions', 10 June 2014, <http://humanityjournal.org/issue-1/human-rights-and-decolonization-new-perspectives-and-open-questions/> (accessed 15 June 2018); Steven L.B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Meredith Terretta, 'Anti-Colonial Lawyering, Postwar Human Rights, and Decolonization across Imperial Boundaries in Africa', *Canadian Journal of History*, 52, 3 (2017) 448-478; Brian Simpson, 'Self-determination and Decolonization', in Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (September 2017) doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198713197.013.25 (accessed 26 July 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Mark Philip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> One notable exception being Samuel Moyn, 'Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights', in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 85-106.

<sup>34</sup> Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 316.

1960s and 1970s on.<sup>35</sup> Since it was ecumenical Protestants who were most likely to endorse human rights or internationalist ideals more generally, it seems plausible that this has been a significant factor, especially considering the fact that the literature on the history of human rights has emanated to a large extent from the United States.

Furthermore, the ascription to human rights of a ‘secular’ character is an obvious reason. For example, Petra Goedde, in her otherwise insightful account of cultural globalization after 1945, has written that ‘[i]n many ways the postwar rise of human rights in the international arena became a secular religion of sorts for rational Enlightenment thinkers across the world.’<sup>36</sup> Goedde’s phrasing calls to mind Stephen Hopgood’s characterization of Amnesty International, the paragon of human rights advocacy from the 1970s onward, as ‘culturally and by inclination Christian but allied to universal rights that were successful precisely because of their secularity’.<sup>37</sup> But the question of the ‘secularity’ of human rights is a complex one, and certainly not reducible to the assumption that the postwar decline in religious adherence, institutions, and authority meant that religion exerted no influence on the postwar trajectory of human rights.<sup>38</sup> The answer must, rather, take into account the continuing role of religious actors in public and international affairs, including their positioning in relationship to the mutable dividing line between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’.<sup>39</sup>

Historians have tended to omit religious organizations from analyses of (international) ‘civil society’ or ‘non-governmental organizations’, categories of actors that often played a crucial role in the field of human rights. In his agenda-setting book on international organizations and internationalism more widely, *Global Community* (2002), the historian Akira Iriye excluded ‘religious institutions’ as such from his category of ‘non-governmental organizations’ – a distinction he himself recognized as ‘tenuous’, but found necessary as otherwise ‘at this stage of scholarship’, the work would become ‘unmanageable’.<sup>40</sup> Iriye’s choice of the word ‘non-governmental organizations’ suggests a more narrowly technical approach, yet this term came into use through the United Nations system, which from the outset gave the CCIA consultative status as just such an organization. With good

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<sup>35</sup> David A. Hollinger, ‘After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity’, *Journal of American History*, 98, 1 (2011) 21-48, quote on 22.

<sup>36</sup> Petra Goedde, ‘Global Cultures’, in Akira Iriye, ed., *Global Interdependence: The World after 1945* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013) 537-678, on 650.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006) 60.

<sup>38</sup> On this decline, see for instance Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> On the concept of secularization, see José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002) 2.

reason, then, Iriye's position has been critiqued by James C. Kennedy and the editors of a recent volume on religious internationalism as reflecting 'the Enlightenment origins of the term "civil society" and its inherently Western bias', which have led to an undue separation of religion and civil society.<sup>41</sup> Kennedy admits that churches do not meet certain frequently used criteria for qualifying as 'civil society', notably the fact that membership from childhood and the inward, spiritual orientation of churches are at odds with notions of 'a voluntaristic, secular civil society'.<sup>42</sup> Yet he argues that excluding international federations of churches like the WCC from the category of 'non-governmental organizations', 'might strike some Christian ecumenists as missing the heart of their international presence and the deeper purpose of their humanitarian effort'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, as this dissertation aims to show, it would miss an influential current of distinctly Christian human rights advocacy, which through the WCC tapped into a global ecumenical network. Fortunately, in recent years scholarship on the history of human rights has begun to give increasing attention to religion, including specific contributions on ecumenism. The next section discusses how some of this most recent literature has begun to evaluate the role of Catholics, Protestants, and the ecumenical movement.

## Human rights, Christianity, and the ecumenical movement, 1937-1948

Among historians, there has been a recent surge in interest in the relationship between Christianity and human rights, focused on the 1930s and 1940s. Historians have evaluated the political valence of the ecumenical movement and its conception of human rights in very different ways. Broadly speaking, the literature on the ecumenical movement has fallen into two camps: accounts that focus on the 'conservative' nature of ecumenical human rights, distinct from and even hostile to secular liberalism, and those that stress 'liberal' contributions, which cast the turn to human rights as part of Protestantism's coming to term with a secularizing and diverse world.<sup>44</sup> The former are the focus of Moyn in his *Christian Human Rights*, in which he argues, writing about both Catholics and Protestants, that not only the 'history of Christian human rights in the 1940s is the major part of the

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<sup>41</sup> Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, 'Introduction: Rethinking Religion and Globalization', in Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, eds., *Religious Internationalism in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 1-19, on 4; James C. Kennedy, 'Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationalism', in Green and Viaene., *Religious Internationalism*, 292-318, on 293-4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>44</sup> I draw here on Reynolds, 'Against the World', 169.

history of human rights generally at the time', but also, provocatively, that 'Christian human rights were part and parcel of a reformulation of conservatism in the name of a vision of moral constraint, not human emancipation or individual liberation'.<sup>45</sup> With regard to ecumenical Protestants, Moyn focuses much of his attention on the German historian Gerhard Ritter, an enthusiastic participant at the WCC's founding assembly but a conservative Lutheran (though he acknowledges the exceptional nature of Ritter's support for human rights, since most Lutherans regarded it with suspicion).<sup>46</sup> More importantly, Moyn argues that 'religious freedom became an international human right', and the principal one in the eyes of ecumenists, not because they acquiesced to 'political secularism' but because they sought to resist it, above all its aggressive manifestation in the Soviet Union. '[M]issionary proselytizing' provided another reason.<sup>47</sup> Moyn, following the work of Marco Duranti has argued that the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), though primarily the work of Catholics, deployed religious freedom 'as a crucial tool to stave secularism off'.<sup>48</sup> Such arguments are consonant with assessments that have stressed how the WCC leaned towards the emergent Western 'camp' in the early Cold War.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, there are those historians who have emphasized the 'liberal' impetus behind the ecumenical movement's turn to human rights, especially through its American participants. Andrew Preston has stressed that American liberal mainline Protestants, who were heavily involved in the ecumenical movement, 'campaign[ed] against the anti-communist direction of American foreign policy and in favour of decolonisation, nuclear arms control, and global social justice', as well as human

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<sup>45</sup> Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 4 and 10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., ch. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 145-146, 150.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 156; Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the European Convention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); cf. Marco Duranti, 'Curbing Labour's Totalitarian Temptation: European Human Rights Law and British Postwar Politics', *Humanity*, 3, 3 (2012) 361-383.

<sup>49</sup> Dianne Kirby, 'The Impact of the Cold War on the Formation of the WCC', in Joachim Garstecki, ed., *Die Ökumene und der Widerstand gegen Diktaturen. Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus als Herausforderung an die Kirchen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2007) 135-158; Dianne Kirby, 'From Bridge to Divide: East-West Relations and Christianity during the Second World War and Early Cold War', *International History Review*, 36, 4 (2014) 721-744. Regarding the British churches in particular, see also Tina Alice Bonne Reeh, 'The Church of England and Britain's Cold War' (PhD dissertation: Oxford University, 2015); Philip M. Coupland, *Britannia, Europa and Christendom: British Christians and European Integration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Marilyn Frances Thomas, 'Anglo/GDR Relations and the Role of Christian Idealism in Cold War Politics 1961-1965: A Case Study of the Coventry/Dresden Project' (PhD dissertation: University College London, 2002). On religion and the Cold War more generally, see Dianne Kirby, ed., *Religion and the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); and Philip Muehlenbeck, ed., *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012). On Christian Realism, see Mark Thomas Edwards, *The Right of the Protestant Left: God's Totalitarianism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Heather A. Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Christian Realists, 1920-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). On religious freedom in relation to American foreign policy, see Anna Su, *Exporting Freedom: Religious Liberty and American Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

rights.<sup>50</sup> Their international engagement through both the Federal (later National) Council of Churches and the WCC was rooted in the Social Gospel, including its manifestation in the missionary movement, as well as ‘Wilsonian internationalism and a belief in international organisation’.<sup>51</sup> Michael G. Thompson’s account of interwar American ecumenism and the 1937 Oxford conference has also highlighted opposition to empire, racism, and ‘idoltrous’ nationalism.<sup>52</sup> Building on the work of David Hollinger, Gene Zubovich has shown that human rights also featured prominently in the domestic politics of American liberal Protestants in the mid-1940s, as they deployed the concept in the cause of desegregation and social justice.<sup>53</sup> Zubovich has emphasized how the rise of the Soviet Union did not merely cause apprehension but also ‘acted as a mirror to the parochialism of American Protestantism, moving them further in their aspiration to discard their cultural baggage and emerge as a yet more universal force on behalf of social justice in the world’.<sup>54</sup> These works align with an understanding of the WCC as an organization that sought primarily to transcend the Cold War or even to transform it.<sup>55</sup>

As this variety of viewpoints suggests, more work is still needed on how to situate the perspective of ecumenical Protestants, especially in Europe: as Paul Hanebrink has recently written, recent works such as Reynolds’, rather than furnishing a definitive answer, ‘reveal how much work remains to be done to situate Protestantism in the history of transwar Europe’.<sup>56</sup> The bifurcation in the literature described above can in part be explained from its focus on either European Christians

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Preston, ‘Peripheral Visions: American Mainline Protestants and the Global Cold War’, *Cold War History*, 13, 1 (2013) 109-130, on 112. Cf. Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012) 465-495; William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Preston, ‘Peripheral Visions’, 115.

<sup>52</sup> Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015) second part.

<sup>53</sup> Gene Zubovich, ‘The Global Gospel: Protestant Internationalism and American Liberalism, 1940-1960’ (PhD dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 2015) 123.

<sup>54</sup> Gene Zubovich, ‘The Protestant Search for “the Universal Christian Community” between Decolonization and Communism’, *Religions*, 8, 17 (2017) 5, <http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/8/2/17> (accessed 15 June 2018).

<sup>55</sup> This is the tendency in the contributions to Julius Filo, ed., *Christian World Community – and the Cold War: International Research Conference in Bratislava on 5 – 8 September 2011* (Bratislava: Comenius University, 2012); the special issue on ‘Ökumenische Zusammenarbeit und Weltpolitik’ of *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte/Contemporary Church History*, 30, 2 (2017); Paul Mojzes, ed., *North American Churches and the Cold War* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018) (this latter volume was not published in time to be used for this dissertation).

<sup>56</sup> Paul Hanebrink, ‘European Protestants Between Anti-Communism and Anti-Totalitarianism: The Other Interwar Kulturkampf?’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53, 3 (2018) 622-643, on 626. For a recent contribution in this area see John Carter Wood, ‘This Is Your Hour: Christian Intellectuals in Britain and the Crisis of Europe, 1937-1949’ (*Habilitationsschrift*: Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, 2018).

or American Protestants, respectively.<sup>57</sup> A number of recent works, however, has sought an explanation for the ecumenical movement's ideological inchoateness in its underlying commitment to combating 'secularism'. According to Reynolds, 'anti-secularism' translated 'the international conflicts that threatened Christian unity into a religious problem: man's search for self-sufficiency and denial of his responsibility to God'.<sup>58</sup> As he writes, '[b]y encompassing liberal individualism and its apparent opposites of Nazism and Communism under the rubric of a coherent enemy, ecumenists sought to consolidate Christian unity in a decade of political polarization that threatened once again to alienate the Germans from their co-religionists in other countries.'<sup>59</sup> Udi Greenberg has extended this analysis of the ecumenical movement's antisecularism to the missionary movement, connecting it with calls for decolonization and European integration.<sup>60</sup>

In their attempts to articulate a Christian conception of man that could withstand the challenge of secularism, ecumenists drew on aspects of liberalism but integrated these into a conception of personalism. Terence Renaud has written that at the 1937 Oxford conference, ecumenists adopted what came to be called the 'Oxford Doctrine of Man', which rooted rights in 'the single right of personal self-fulfilment through acknowledgement of the Word of God'.<sup>61</sup> As Renaud writes: 'By conceptualizing "the existence of man as person as existence in community", the churches interpreted the relationship between the individual and the collective as mutually constitutive.'<sup>62</sup> Crucially, Renaud distinguishes Protestant from Catholic personalism: '[a]lthough Protestant personalism described humans as neighbours who shared in a common partnership with God, it said little about the sort of communal rights and duties that lay at the core of Catholic personalism'. Instead, ecumenists 'called for a universal community of faith that would recognize no distinctions based on nation, race, or class'.<sup>63</sup> This, coupled with their decision to establish the WCC, in Renaud's view provided 'the two main ingredients of any human rights regime: a universalist commitment to defending individual human beings and a global institutional framework for enacting that commitment'.<sup>64</sup> In other words,

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<sup>57</sup> This difference is also a well-established trope in the literature on the WCC. Cf. for a more recent view Greenberg, who writes that who argues that 'American ecumenism had a different intellectual agenda and operated in a different political context than its European counterpart'. Udi Greenberg, 'Protestants, Decolonisation, and European Integration, 1885-1961', *Journal of Modern History*, 89, 2 (2017) 314-354, on 316n4.

<sup>58</sup> Reynolds, 'Against the World', 16.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>60</sup> Greenberg, 'Protestants, Decolonization, and European Integration'.

<sup>61</sup> Terence Renaud, 'Human Rights as Radical Anthropology: Protestant Theology and Ecumenism in the Transwar Era', *The Historical Journal*, 60, 2 (2016) 1-26, on 20.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

compared to Catholics, Protestant human rights was rooted in a more global vision, while it was still more communitarian than secular liberalism.

Although Renaud's account describes how transwar Protestant thought fulfilled the intellectual conditions of possibility for the WCC to come to its support of human rights, it leaves open the question how the concept figured in the organization's practice. Church and missionary leaders in various countries could attach their own understanding to human rights, as their specific theological and political contexts required. An important case in this respect is that of the West Germans, who in Brandon Bloch's view stood apart from the 'mainstream of Christian human rights thinking in the 1940s', as Barthian and conservative Lutheran Germans shared 'a theological orientation toward the pervasiveness of human sin and the divine origins of law'. This led their representatives to 'criticize the theological foundations of the ecumenical movement and to draw on alternative conceptions of human rights in their attacks on denazification and war crimes trials'.<sup>65</sup> While such Germans could participate in the WCC, such usage of human rights represented a discourse very different from that developed by Anglo-American ecumenists. Though such uses of the term were not the driving force behind the adoption of human rights by the WCC, they illustrate how the concept's ambiguity and malleability allowed different parts of its constituency to endow the term with different meanings.

Pamela Slotte has written that in the immediate postwar years, for the churches, 'a human rights vocabulary was not the predominant way of framing religious and, more precisely, ethical concerns'. While 'freedom of conscience and religious liberty were on the agenda, especially for Protestant missionary societies and minority churches', there was no 'official explicit human rights work on the part of the world churches amounting to more than single-issue activism, such as efforts to secure religious liberty in the context of missionary work'.<sup>66</sup> Although the Amsterdam Assembly's Section IV treated human rights at some length, as discussed above, Slotte notes that the conference's 'Message' did not use the term.<sup>67</sup> Slotte writes that nevertheless, 'for some within the ecumenical

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<sup>65</sup> Brandon Bloch, 'Faith for This World: Protestantism and the Reconstruction of Constitutional Democracy in Germany, 1933-1968' (PhD dissertation: Harvard University, 2018) 97. Cf. Martin Greschat, 'Verantwortung für den Menschen: Protestantische Aktivitäten für Menschenrechte und Religionsfreiheit in und nach dem II. Weltkrieg', in Bernhard Jendorff and Gerhard Schmalenberg, eds., *Politik – Religion – Menschenwürde* (Gießen: Justus-Liebig-Universität, 1993) 103-123, on 119-121.

<sup>66</sup> Pamela Slotte, "'Blessed are the Peacemakers": Christian Internationalism, Ecumenical Voices and the Quest for Human Rights', in Pamela Slotte and Miia Halme-Tuomisaari, eds., *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 293-329, on 294.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 305-306.



movement, human rights became the term for voicing some of those same concerns [of the churches] in the international arena'. Her account, being theological in nature, does not go into detail as to the form this took, other than to gesture at a focus on individual rights in opposition to the totalitarian potential of the state.<sup>68</sup> While it is tempting to link the ideal of the 'responsible society', the ordering principle of the Amsterdam Assembly, to its endorsement of human rights, it should be noted that this principle in itself made no reference to human rights. Though the two concepts shared elective affinities, the 'responsible society' was domestic in focus, whereas human rights were conceived of as a matter of international affairs.<sup>69</sup> Attempts at internationalizing the 'responsible society' would only gain traction in the 1960s, with talk of an 'international responsible society'. Meanwhile, the articulation of an 'international ethos' foundered.<sup>70</sup>

The WCC itself only developed a focused and sustained policy with respect to the one issue the churches could agree about with unity of purpose: religious freedom.<sup>71</sup> Human rights as a component for world order remained a more abstract and ambiguous ideal, but it served as an important vehicle for the advancement of religious freedom. As John Stuart has written, already in 1942, American Protestants, organized into the Joint Committee on Religious Liberty, decided that '[t]he best means of securing religious liberty (...) would be through an international charter of human rights, within which protection could be accorded to religion and conscience'.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Matti Peiponen has explained the CCIA's commitment to human rights not only from concern for international order but also from the American churches' reasoning that 'the only politically possible way to forward religious liberty was to place it firmly and ineradicably in the context of other human

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 307 and 327.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Katharina Kunter, 'Global Reach and Global Agenda: The World Council of Churches', in Stanley D. Brunn, ed., *The Changing World Religion Map: Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and Politics* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015) 2909-2923, on 2914. The Amsterdam Assembly defined the 'responsible society' as follows: 'For a society to be responsible under modern conditions it is required that the people have freedom to control, to criticize, and to change their governments, that power be made responsible by law and tradition, and be distributed as widely as possible through the whole community. It is required that economic justice and provision of equality be established for all the members of society.' Quoted in Paul Abrecht, 'The Development of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action', in Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 2: 1948-1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993; 1st ed. 1970) 233-260, on 242.

<sup>70</sup> Slotte, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers", 328.

<sup>71</sup> Similarly, one of the WCC's nineteenth-century predecessors, the Evangelical Alliance, had been able to reach agreement on religious rights but not political rights, though arguably the WCC achieved a greater degree of consensus in the latter area. See Todd Thompson, 'The Evangelical Alliance, Religious Liberty, and the Evangelical Conscience in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of Religious History*, 33, 1 (2009) 49-65.

<sup>72</sup> John Stuart, 'Empire, Mission, Ecumenism, and Human Rights: "Religious Liberty" in Egypt, 1919-1956', *Church History*, 83, 1 (2014) 110-134, on 125.

rights and then campaign for human rights in their entirety'.<sup>73</sup> Concern for postwar order was secondary to this, especially as the viability of the UN as a guarantor of international peace was soon called into question by the onset of the Cold War. Ecumenical expressions of support for the 'International Bill of Rights' at the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly, insofar as they reflected widespread support, are best understood in the context of the postwar moment's high hopes for the development of international governance, which would prove short-lived.<sup>74</sup> Thus, while human rights language would occasionally crop up in a number of different areas of the WCC's work, primarily in relationship to the United Nations, the CCIA's work for 'human rights and religious liberty' in practice most often meant 'religious liberty (as a human right)'.

With respect to religious freedom, Linde Lindkvist has recently described how O. Frederick Nolde, as a non-governmental consultant at the drafting of the Universal Declaration, worked with fellow ecumenist and drafter Charles Malik, the Lebanese Ambassador to the UN and to the US, to shape the secular language of the Universal Declaration, especially its Article 18, in such a way as to promote a Christian agenda. The outcome was a text that distinguished between inward freedom of conscience on the one hand and outward manifestations of religion on the other; that included an explicit freedom to change one's religion or belief; and that focused, despite a reference to manifesting one's religion 'in community with others', on individual rights. The latter point ran counter to ecumenical objectives, which had envisioned greater room for corporate rights, to better protect the rights of churches. But the former two represented achievements of the ecumenists' lobby, which was based on the concern that mere freedom of 'worship' would enable regimes hostile to religion to curtail religious freedom, and the specifically missionary worry that in Islamic countries, missionary activity would be hampered by prohibitions of conversion.<sup>75</sup> The Universal Declaration's Article 18 thus became the cornerstone of religious liberty advocacy by ecumenists and others.<sup>76</sup>

Ecumenists' adjusting their ambitions to fit what was possible at the UN meant that the framework of human rights had changed their promotion of religious liberty: rather than advocate for privileges and protections for Christians, ecumenists now committed themselves to universal, individual rights. As Katharina Kunter has written, this 'meant a new challenge for the churches in

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<sup>73</sup> Peiponen, *Ecumenical Action*, 211.

<sup>74</sup> Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly*, 96.

<sup>75</sup> Linde Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>76</sup> For an early overview see Ninan Koshy, 'The Ecumenical Understanding of Religious Liberty: The Contribution of the World Council of Churches', *Journal of Church and State*, 38, 1 (1996) 137-154.

Europe, as hitherto they had rejected an individual-oriented, secular understanding of human rights as anti-church and individualistic'.<sup>77</sup> The Amsterdam Assembly's 'Declaration on Religious Liberty' reflected the change, in its far greater emphasis on individuals rather than churches, compared to the statements developed at earlier ecumenical conferences at Oxford in 1937 and Madras in 1938.<sup>78</sup> But at the same time, ecumenists had succeeded in influencing the meaning of postwar human rights to better suit their purposes. Lindkvist has thus aptly written that to Nolde, UN human rights were 'both a reflection of Christian moral teachings and a mechanism that could be wielded for the sake of guarding Christian interests'.<sup>79</sup>

## The WCC and human rights in the 1970s

Little work has been done on the WCC's engagement with human rights in the 1950s and 1960s, while the 1970s have been the subject of intense scrutiny.<sup>80</sup> The lone overview of the entire period, by the political scientist Karsten Lehmann, focuses on the CCIA's position as a conduit between the WCC and the UN. The most significant specific activity he describes during the 1950s and 1960s is the CCIA's response to the UN's Study of Discrimination in the Matter of Religious Rights and Practices (carried out under its rapporteur Arcot Krishnaswami), where the CCIA sought to protect an expansive interpretation of Article 18. As to the other two areas of activity Lehmann describes, namely attempts at formulating an 'international ethos' and developing a theological basis for religious freedom, the CCIA was either ineffectual (in the former case) or obstructionist (in the latter).<sup>81</sup> In Lehmann's view, only '[f]rom the mid-1960s onwards, a new generation of WCC officers increased the effort to mainstream human rights inside the WCC, accompanied by [a] redefining of the CCIA'. This process was initiated through a 1967 conference in The Hague, which reconstituted

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<sup>77</sup> Katharina Kunter, 'Christianity, Human Rights, and Socio-Ethical Reorientations', in Jens Holger Schjørring, Norman A. Hjelm, and Kevin Ward., eds, *History of Global Christianity, Volume III: History of Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018) 127-146, on 133.

<sup>78</sup> J.H. Oldham, ed., *The Churches Survey Their Task: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community, and State* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1937) 184-185; *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council: Tambaram, Madras, India, Dec. 12-29, 1938* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1939) 146-147.

<sup>79</sup> Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, 85.

<sup>80</sup> A recent overview of the period is Antti Laine, Juha Meriläinen and Matti Peiponen, 'Ecumenical Reconstruction, Advocacy and Action: The World Council in Times of Change, from the 1940s to the early 1970s', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History*, 30, 2 (2017) 327-341.

<sup>81</sup> Karsten Lehmann, *Religious NGOs in International Relations: The Construction of 'the Religious' and 'the Secular'* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 97-102. On attempts at developing an international ethos, cf. Slotte, "'Blessed Are the Peacemakers'", 325-328.

the CCIA by bringing it more closely into the fold of the WCC, the 1968 Uppsala Assembly, at which the CCIA's agenda-setting power on international affairs was sharply reduced in comparison to earlier assemblies, and the retirement of all but one of the CCIA's longtime officers around 1968. The CCIA's new officers then initiated a process of redefining human rights, which, according to Lehmann, expanded its activities beyond the UN, and made the WCC 'as a whole' an actor in the realm of human rights. Overall, Lehmann writes, the CCIA's development was one 'from diplomats of the churches to proponents of human rights'.<sup>82</sup> Lehmann's focus on the relationship between the WCC and the UN, however, means that he does not deal with the many other areas of the CCIA's involvement.

The lion's share of writings on the WCC's human rights engagement have been evaluations of its conduct in relation to Eastern Europe, particularly with regard to religious freedom in the 1970s. With the entry of several major Orthodox churches, most notably the Russian Orthodox Church, into the WCC in 1961, the organization significantly expanded its geographical and denominational representation, but at the price of intense disagreement over how to handle relations with churches that were subject to state control. In the 1970s, against the background of increasing attention to human rights in the Eastern bloc, these tensions came to a head, most notoriously at the 1975 Nairobi Assembly, when the Russian Orthodox layman Lev Regelson and the priest Gleb Yakunin sent a letter to the WCC's General Secretary, Philip Potter, calling for the WCC to make religious liberty 'the central theme of Christian ecumenism'. Against this background, the Assembly's discussion on the Helsinki Final Act, which had been adopted a few months prior, became highly charged, but the WCC was 'unable to come to a clear position or critical reflection on its own attitude towards the question of religious freedom in the socialist states'.<sup>83</sup> The issue remained a highly divisive one in subsequent years.

Two of the most vociferously critical archivally-based accounts of the WCC's course were produced by the theologian Armin Boyens and, more recently, the historian Hedwig Richter. Boyens' book-length study, informed by his experience as a participant in the WCC at the time, approved of what he viewed as the founding 'generation' of the WCC's clear-eyed and realistic approach to dealing with churches in the Eastern bloc. In stark contrast, Boyens characterized the new 'generation' that came to dominate the WCC from the late 1960s onward as naïve or disingenuous in their emphasis

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 103-114.

<sup>83</sup> Translation mine. Katharina Kunter, *Die Kirchen im KSZE-Prozeß 1968-1978* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000) 151.

on ‘silent diplomacy’ and their willingness to place trust in their Eastern church interlocutors.<sup>84</sup> Similarly to Boyens, Richter’s shorter account argues that the priority of the WCC’s new leadership was not the fate of Christians under socialism but projects such as the Programme to Combat Racism, which played into the foreign policy priorities of socialist states.<sup>85</sup>

These and related charges were the subject of much debate within the ecumenical movement and beyond. Boyens’ work, for instance, which Christian Albers rightly characterizes as ‘in part tendentious’, prompted a book-length point-by-point rebuttal from a former WCC leader, Hans-Joachim Held.<sup>86</sup> More balanced accounts, most importantly by Katharina Kunter, acknowledged shortcomings in the WCC’s approach to Eastern Europe, not only with respect to churchmen but also to dissident movements more generally, while taking more seriously the motivations of its leaders in avoiding public criticism.<sup>87</sup> Kunter’s work, in particular, has subsequently drawn attention to the process of ‘globalization’ the WCC was undergoing at the time, not least through the rise of non-Western member churches, which elevated the concerns of Christians from the ‘Third World’ on the ecumenical agenda. In addition, together with Annegreth Schilling, Kunter has argued that the WCC became ‘politicized’, taking forthright stances on an increasing number of issues.<sup>88</sup>

Drawing on this historiographical insight in his analysis of the WCC’s human rights engagement from 1966 to 1975, Albers has criticized accounts such as those of Boyens and Richter for reducing the WCC’s engagement with the Third World to a ‘colorless foil’. Their suggestion, writes Albers, is that the turn to human rights in the Third World meant turning away from the ‘actual’ human rights issues in the East.<sup>89</sup> Albers instead takes the WCC’s newfound engagement with the global South as central to its development of an ‘integral’ approach to human rights. Whereas the

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<sup>84</sup> Armin Boyens, ‘Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen und Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland zwischen West und Ost’, in Gerhard Besier, Armin Boyens, and Gerhard Lindemann, *Nationaler Protestantismus und Ökumenische Bewegung: Kirchliches Handeln im Kalten Krieg (1945-1990)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999) 27-322.

<sup>85</sup> Hedwig Richter, ‘Der Protestantismus und das linksrevolutionäre Pathos: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen in Genf im Ost-West-Konflikt in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 36 (2010) 408-436.

<sup>86</sup> Christian Albers, ‘Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte im Kontext von Kaltem Krieg und Dekolonisierung’, in Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen und die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014) 189-215, on 204n77; Heinz Joachim Held, *Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Visier der Kritik. Eine kritische Lektüre der Forschungsarbeit “ÖRK und EKD zwischen West und Ost”* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2001).

<sup>87</sup> For an early account, see Kunter, *Die Kirchen*.

<sup>88</sup> Katharina Kunter, ‘Not only in the Shadows of the Cold War: Africa, Socialism and European Christianity’, in Katharina Kunter and Jens Holger Schjørring, eds., *Changing Relations between Churches in Europe and Africa: The Internationalization of Christianity and Politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008) 109-118; Katharina Kunter, ‘Die lange Weg zur Anerkennung: Die Kirchen und Menschenrechte nach 1945’, in Antonius Liedhegener and Ines-Jacqueline Werkner, eds., *Religion, Menschenrechte und Menschenrechtspolitik* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2010) 153-174.

<sup>89</sup> Translation mine. Albers, ‘Die ÖRK’, 192.

CCIA had focused in its first two decades on religious freedom, its new leaders, the Argentinian Leopoldo J. Nilus and the American Dwain C. Epps, led an expansion of its work beyond civil and political rights to include social, economic, and collective rights. In distinction to Moyn's thesis of the 1970s 'breakthrough' of human rights, Albers argues that unlike actors in the 'secular realm', the WCC's approach 'blended together' civil and political rights with 'anticolonial' conceptions, 'in the overarching motive of the establishment of a better world'. He also writes that '[i]n a globalized WCC', human rights allowed non-Western Christians to 'see eye to eye' with Western ecumenists by articulating concerns in a common language.<sup>90</sup> In Albers' view, this process constituted 'an important contribution to the question of the universality of human rights'.<sup>91</sup> The expansion of the frame of analysis to a global one thus allows for a more balanced analysis of the WCC's human rights engagement in the 1970s, an approach that I expand on.

Whereas Albers' account deals with the WCC's overall development, Patrick William Kelly has made an important contribution as to the most important area of its human rights engagement during these years: Latin America. Kelly calls attention to the WCC as an 'underappreciated actor' with regard to 'the interplay of local and transnational factors' in response to the 1973 military coup in Chile.<sup>92</sup> He has argued that 'violence in Brazil and Chile in the 1970s provoked a local, regional, and transnational embrace of human rights ideology by Christian activists around the world', and that 'religious activists from Latin America and abroad were among the primary agents in the construction of novel forms of transnational activism'.<sup>93</sup> In his view, 'action' preceded 'ideas': '[i]n striving to save lives and end suffering in Brazil and Chile, Christians developed a praxis of human rights that had never existed before'.<sup>94</sup> Kelly's overarching narrative, however, is one of the narrowing of responses to the violence of Latin American dictatorships, as 'the politics of emergency' caused 'solidarity activism' to decline in favor of human rights activism in the mode of Amnesty International, with its depoliticized and minimalist mandate.<sup>95</sup> Kelly's thesis, which aligns with that of Moyn's *The Last Utopia*, does not easily map onto the WCC's continued anticolonial trajectory as described by Albers. This

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<sup>90</sup> Translation mine. Ibid., 209.

<sup>91</sup> Translation mine. Ibid., 210. Cf. also Albers' forthcoming dissertation.

<sup>92</sup> Patrick William Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies: Latin America and the Making of Global Human Rights Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 67.

<sup>93</sup> Patrick William Kelly, 'Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Transnational Christian Activism, Human Rights, and State Violence in Brazil and Chile in the 1970s', in Alexander Wilde, ed., *Religious Responses to Violence: Human Rights in Latin America Past and Present* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016) 95-122, on 96.

<sup>94</sup> Kelly, 'Human Rights and Christian Responsibility', 97.

<sup>95</sup> Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 11.

raises the question as to how the more ‘minimalist’ and ‘maximalist’ elements in the WCC’s human rights engagement interacted – a question with implications for the wider historiography on human rights.<sup>96</sup>

## Structure and methodology

While the literature focused on the period until 1948 has yielded much insight about the motivations behind the advent of ecumenical human rights talk, especially at the declaratory level, there is hardly any significant work on the practice of its human rights engagement from the 1940s to the 1960s. To what extent did the WCC’s human rights advocacy extend beyond religious freedom? Based on the above discussion and the archives of the CCIA, this dissertation’s point of departure is that human rights in practice served primarily as a framework within which to embed the specific issue of religious freedom. ‘Associated’ human rights such as freedom of expression or association entered ecumenical discourse in the course of such advocacy, but rarely as issues in themselves, the CCIA’s general support for the development of United Nations human rights instruments notwithstanding.<sup>97</sup> A major question this raises is: to what extent was the WCC’s advocacy of religious freedom defined by its framing as a human right? As the first part of the dissertation shows, its work took different forms in different contexts, and with this, the role human rights language played varied. The WCC tended towards a conciliatory approach, in which public denunciation was a last resort, and its approach to dialogue went well beyond merely legalistic appeals. In its lobbying, however, it frequently invoked the Universal Declaration’s Article 18 and related rights. The universal scope of human rights played an important role in promoting ecumenical interests and establishing common ground while avoiding the appearance of lobbying for specifically Christian interests.

A key question on which the dissertation seeks to advance the state of scholarship is: in which areas were ecumenists most active in promoting their conception of religious freedom? As Lindkvist has pointed out, the widely influential 1945 study by the American ecumenist Searle M. Bates, *Religious Liberty*, showed what he and the American Joint Committee on Religious Liberty ‘took to be the three greatest and most acute challenges to religious freedom on the world stage: Soviet Russia, Fascist Spain, and the “Moslem Countries”’.<sup>98</sup> This corresponded to the three enemies identified by the IMC’s

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>97</sup> Nolde’s own later accounting of the CCIA’s activities also bears this out: O. Frederick Nolde, *Free and Equal: Human Rights in Ecumenical Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1968). While the title refers to human rights, the examples the book provides almost exclusively relate to religious freedom.

<sup>98</sup> Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, 72.

1947 Whitby conference: ‘militant communism, resurgent Islam, and political Roman Catholicism’.<sup>99</sup> The same priorities were reflected in the WCC’s deliberations at the end of the 1940s: while its Central Committee in 1949 adopted a statement denouncing curtailment of religious freedom in countries under Soviet control, a number of delegates successfully argued for widening the Central Committee’s concern to ‘serious situations where restrictions were imposed by dominant religious majorities’. The CCIA was tasked with executing a study on this subject, and in consultation with the WCC’s Executive Committee, it was decided ‘to limit the present phase of the investigation to areas where Roman Catholicism or Islam represent a dominant force’.<sup>100</sup> The resultant ‘Study on Religious Freedom in Face of Dominant Forces’ (1950) would shape ecumenical thought on the subject in the following years, signaling a concern for religious freedom that went well beyond its curtailment by communist governments, in no small part due to the influence of the missionary movement. The first part of the dissertation follows this threefold distinction: the first chapter deals with the Soviet Union, the second with decolonizing Indonesia and Northern Nigeria, and the third with Franco’s Spain. The selection of these cases stems from their priority among the many countries the ecumenical movement dealt with, though other significant cases remain to be studied.

The first chapter retraces the relatively familiar story of the WCC’s establishment of relations with the Russian Orthodox Church and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and its simultaneous efforts at advocating for religious liberty in the Soviet Union. Reconsidering this story through the lens of the recent historiography on human rights, I argue that the changing context of religious and political dissent left the WCC in the 1970s out of step with the ‘breakthrough’ of human rights. Already from the 1960s on, its dependence on church leaders, rather than dissidents, as interlocutors predisposed it to an institutional perspective that favored attempts at dialogue over denunciation. At the same time, changing views on the nature of Cold War détente and the meaning of human rights led the CCIA’s leadership to deprioritize religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

The second chapter begins by outlining the WCC’s reserved approach to the right to self-determination, in the context of decolonization. It then goes on to argue that the primary way in which the language of human rights featured in the ecumenical response to anticolonialism and decolonization was with respect to religious freedom, namely that of Christian missionaries and of Christian minorities. The chapter demonstrates this through the cases of Indonesia, during its

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Zendingconsulaat Batavia, ‘De conferentie van de International Missionary Council, Whitby – Canada, 5 – 24 juli 1947’, 5 April 1948, 6 and 10, Archives of the Raad voor de Zending, Utrechts Archief, 501.

<sup>100</sup> WCC, *Meetings and Records of the Central Committee* (MRCC) 1950, 72-73.



revolution against Dutch colonial rule, and Nigeria in the late 1950s, where the ecumenical movement was particularly concerned with Northern Nigeria, which was majority Muslim. The ecumenical movement worked to insert provisions for religious freedom into these countries' postcolonial constitutions, modeled on the Universal Declaration's Article 18 and informed by ecumenical statements on religious freedom.

The third chapter takes as its case study Spain under Franco, where the discrimination against the country's tiny Protestant minorities prompted sustained international attention, including from the ecumenical movement. The CCIA used its ties to the foreign policy establishments of especially the United States and Britain to pressure the Spanish regime, to which end it invoked the language of human rights. At the same time, the WCC developed ties with Spanish Protestants, the Spanish government, and with Catholics outside Spain in its attempts to liberalize the country's approach to religious freedom. Because of the Christian nature of the regime and the church hierarchy, ecumenical attempts at dialogue depended more on religious than secular articulations of religious freedom. The developments of the Second Vatican Council ultimately proved crucial in pushing Spain towards change, and by the end of the 1960s the enmity between the Vatican and the WCC on the question of religious freedom had been replaced by cooperation.

The second part of the dissertation contrasts the WCC's early advocacy of religious freedom with the radically different conception of human rights it developed in the early 1970s. The dissertation thus emphasizes the discontinuity between the earlier and the latter period, arguing against a phasic narrative in favor of one of rupture. It focuses on three key areas of the WCC's international activities at this time: antiracism, Latin America, and the CCIA-led process of rethinking human rights that culminated in 1974-1975.

The fourth chapter traces the relationship between the WCC's discourses of antiracism and human rights, with specific attention to apartheid in South Africa. This serves as a limiting case as to the importance of human rights language beyond the issue of religious freedom. The chapter argues that despite rhetorical linkages in the WCC's early days, questions of 'race relations' and human rights by and large remained separate. In the mid-1960s, the American civil rights movement and the development of increasingly strong positions on racism at the UN spurred the WCC to connect its antiracism to its commitment to human rights. But human rights discourse was marginal to the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism, established in 1969, which focused on structural, especially economic, factors. Suspicion of the liberal orientation of human rights meant that human rights could only serve as an auxiliary to ecumenical antiracism in the 1970s.

Chapter five turns to Latin America, where the rise of military dictatorships created the crucible within which the WCC dramatically widened its human rights agenda and practices. This development got underway from about 1970 but was intensified greatly by the 1973 coup in Chile, to which the WCC responded by establishing a task force that would grow into its Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America. While Latin American liberation theologians were initially indifferent or suspicious towards the concept of human rights, ecumenical meetings helped to convince them of not only its pragmatic utility but its value as a moral principle. Social, economic, and collective rights were integrated into the ecumenical conception of human rights not so much in a legalistic as in a moralistic way, to generate outrage and pressure for structural change. Such usage also allowed for the creative refashioning of rights as tools that emphasized popular agency, particularly on the part of Latin Americans who sought to ‘conscientize’ the continent’s poor and oppressed.

The final chapter follows the CCIA’s parallel attempt at articulating a newly ‘integral’ conception of human rights, which guided its activities in subsequent decades. This process, initiated in 1971, culminated at the 1974 St. Pölten consultation on ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, the outcome of which was elevated to the WCC’s official stance at the 1975 Nairobi Assembly. The WCC’s new conception of human rights was capacious in including a wide range of rights, emphatically including social, economic, and collective rights. It was rooted in liberation theology, and consequently was less individualist and more communitarian in nature; Marxist and anticolonial influences focused it on collective and structural issues of domestic as well as international politics. While not abandoning its efforts at promoting human rights through international lobbying, the CCIA positioned itself as a clearing-house that supported national and local mobilization. The chapter considers different interpretations of this development and emphasizes how the CCIA sought to use the legitimacy of the concept of human rights to broaden the political commitments of the WCC’s constituency to include issues such as the New International Economic Order.

A number of caveats and qualifications are in order, especially given the dissertation’s chronological, geographical, and intellectual scope. Perhaps the most important limitation of the study is the relatively little attention it gives to theology. Other authors have dealt with this aspect in greater depth, including with regard to the CCIA (Peiponen with regard to its founding, Albers with regard to the 1970s). Peiponen’s account in particular, however, shows the pragmatic nature of the CCIA’s work; as he writes, there were no clear ‘common theological denominators’ between the most

important ecumenists driving its work.<sup>101</sup> While the development of the ecumenical positions described above required theological innovation, once established, these bases for the CCIA's work remained relatively stable (a 'Statement on Religious Liberty' adopted by the 1961 New Delhi Assembly elaborated it, but without signifying significant discontinuity) until the 1970s. Given the lack of literature on the CCIA's activities over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, this dissertation focuses on the practice of ecumenical human rights engagement, rather than theological discussions.

While this dissertation's six chapters address the most important elements of the WCC's human rights engagement, there remains scope for further work on the role of human rights language. In particular, there remains room for further work on the CCIA's activities at the UN, notably in the areas of refugees, women's rights, children's rights, and racial discrimination. Efforts were undertaken in each of these areas, but Nolde's overview as well as a survey of the CCIA's archives suggests that these were a relatively minor aspect of its human rights engagement when compared with religious liberty (while not denying that they were significant interests in their own right).<sup>102</sup> With respect to refugees, G. Daniel Cohen has shown that with respect to Palestinian refugees, at least, the WCC sought to adhere to a 'humanitarian' stance, but as the above-cited work by Bloch hints at, the story seems to have been different with respect to German expellees.<sup>103</sup> As to women's rights, it seems that the WCC's work on women's rights was largely severed from its discourse on human rights, similarly to the dynamics at the United Nations, until the early 1970s.<sup>104</sup> The subject was not so much taken up by the CCIA, whose officers were all male, but by the WCC's Department on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society (to use one of this body's changing names). While women such as Kathleen Bliss, Sarah Chakko, Madeleine Barot, Takeda Cho, and later on Cynthia Wedel, Rena Karefa-Smart, and Annie Jiagge played important roles, for instance heading this Department or serving as presidents of the WCC, the participation of women in the WCC remained exceedingly low

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<sup>101</sup> Peiponen, *Ecumenical Action*, 354.

<sup>102</sup> Nolde, *Free and Equal*, 59-62.

<sup>103</sup> G. Daniel Cohen, 'Elusive Neutrality: Christian Humanitarianism and the Question of Palestine, 1948-1967', *Humanity*, 5, 2 (2014) 183-210; but cf. G. Daniel Cohen, 'The "Human Rights Revolution at Work: Displaced Persons in Postwar Europe', in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 45-61 and Gerald Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). On the WCC and refugees see also Peter Gatrell, 'The World-Wide Web of Humanitarianism: NGOs and Population Displacement in the Third Quarter of the Twentieth Century', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 23, 1-2 (2016) 101-115.

<sup>104</sup> Allida Black, 'Are Women 'Human'? The UN and the Struggle to Recognize Women's Rights as Human Rights', in Iriye, Goedde, and Hitchcock, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution*, 133-155, on 134. See also Celia Donert, 'Whose Utopia? Gender, Ideology, and Human Rights at the 1975 World Congress of Women in East Berlin', in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) 68-87.

until the 1970s and 1980s. Only at this point did women's rights (or sexism) rise to prominence on the WCC's agenda.<sup>105</sup> Research in all of the above-mentioned areas would have to determine to what extent these issues should be considered part of the CCIA's human rights agenda, given the distinct features of each (with regard to racial discrimination, some of these are discussed in chapter 4).

An area which would also benefit from further work is the question of the 'Europeanization' of human rights, mentioned above: how was the ecumenical movement situated with respect to the European Convention on Human Rights and the rise of Christian Democracy? Despite the leading role of Catholics in these matters, Protestants played a role – but there are good reasons to think it is not central to at least the story of the WCC's human rights engagement. While Zeilstra has claimed that in the view of the British Council of Churches in 1950, '[a] common observance of human rights was considered to be an essential prerequisite' for European unity, he also notes that at the Amsterdam Assembly, '[t]he idea of the responsible society and the ecumenical efforts to support human rights were not joined with a call to unite Europe', and the Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Co-operation focused on military and economic aspects.<sup>106</sup> The WCC's distance from the European Convention on Human Rights might be explained from the fact that while ecumenists engaged with the nascent project of European integration, concerns that it would contribute to ideological divisions militated against embracing what was essentially a statement of Western European values against the Eastern bloc.<sup>107</sup> Lucian Leustean, whose work has dealt with this question, cites a 1954 ecumenical pamphlet that illustrates this well: 'The European Community is being created not in response to any desire for a crusade, but in response to a desire for peace. It is not to be identified with any ideology.'<sup>108</sup> For the same reason, the WCC's General Secretary, W.A. Visser 't Hooft, argued in 1952 that European values should not be 'defended' because the attempt to do so

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<sup>105</sup> On the subject of women in the WCC, see Melanie Ann May, 'Bonds of Unity: Women, Theology, and the Worldwide Church' (PhD dissertation: Harvard University, 1986) and Janet Estridge Crawford, 'Rocking the Boat: Women's Participation in the World Council of Churches, 1948-1991' (PhD dissertation: Victoria University of Wellington, 1995). For a brief discussion, see Melanie Duguid-May, 'The Ecumenical Movement', in Jens Holger Schjørring, Norman A. Hjelm, and Kevin Ward., eds, *History of Global Christianity, Volume III: History of Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018) 148-181.

<sup>106</sup> Jurjen A. Zeilstra, *European Unity in Ecumenical Thinking 1937-1948* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Uitgevers, 1995) 357 and 379.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Tom Buchanan, 'Human Rights, the Memory of War and the Making of a "European" Identity, 1945-75', in Martin Conway and Kiran Klaus Patel, eds., *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 157-171.

<sup>108</sup> Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation, 'The Future of Europe and the Responsibility of Churches' (1954), quoted in Lucian N. Leustean, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Making of the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 53.

would cause them to evaporate.<sup>109</sup> Into the 1960s, when it began to speak more often and appreciatively of the European Convention, the CCIA prioritized universal over regional norms, based on its commitment to the United Nations and the concept of an all-encompassing ‘international ethos’.<sup>110</sup> The WCC’s approach of developing a ‘third way’ sat at cross-purposes with those promoting the European Convention as an anticommunist manifesto for the defense of a ‘Christian Europe’.

Since the CCIA, as the WCC and IMC’s representative body on the issue of human rights, played the leading role in most instances, the main sets of archival materials I have relied on are the CCIA’s Executive Committee files, its subject files on human rights and religious liberty, its country files, and other documents. This is complemented by the published materials of the CCIA and the WCC, such as the records of the latter’s assemblies and Central Committee meetings. In many places, however, I have followed the story into the archives of other bodies, including the WCC’s General Secretariat, its Secretariat on Religious Liberty, the Joint Working Group, the Commission of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, the Programme to Combat Racism, and the Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America. Occasional use is also made of the archives of the IMC, as well as of materials obtained during a brief foray into the archives of the National Council of Churches in the US. For chapter 3, I have also drawn on the files of Dutch missionary organizations, and in a few places use is made of the archives of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands and those of Justice and Peace Netherlands (a vestige of this research’s original intention of including a case study on the Netherlands). It should be noted that the CCIA’s archives are in the process of being catalogued (by its former officer Dwain C. Epps). In order to prevent archival references from becoming outdated due to minor adjustments in the ordering of documents, I have adopted not the document-specific referencing used in the inventory but folder- or box-level numberings as appropriate. Since the country files are at present entirely unprocessed, I have provided exact references on where documents from these files are located.

Given this source-base, centered on the WCC and especially the CCIA, this dissertation does not independently investigate the viewpoints of the WCC’s member churches or other interlocutors, including governments, non-governmental organizations, and intergovernmental organizations. The

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<sup>109</sup> Jurjen A. Zeilstra, ‘Europäische Einheit im ökumenischen Denken 1937-1948’, in Joachim Garstecki, ed., *Die Ökumene und der Widerstand gegen Diktaturen. Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus als Herausforderung an die Kirchen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2007) 101-126, on 104. See also Jurjen Zeilstra, *Visser ‘t Hooft: Een leven voor de oecumene, 1900-1985* [*Visser ‘t Hooft: A Life for the Oikoumene, 1900-1985*] (Middelburg: Skandalon, 2018).

<sup>110</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1961-1962* (London and New York, 1962) 41. Cf. Zeilstra, *European Unity*, 379.

task of including the perspective of these interlocutors more fully is one left to future studies. This would, among other things, allow for a better estimation of the impact of the WCC's work in each of the cases studied here. While the possible influence of the WCC is hinted at throughout, it should be stated clearly that the object of this study is the ecumenical movement's human rights engagement itself, as an aspect of the wider history of human rights and religious internationalism.

# 1. Between dialogue and denunciation: the World Council of Churches, religious freedom, and human rights in the Soviet Union from the 1940s to the 1970s

‘Though deprived of all material strength, it [the church] is always victorious in *sacrifice*.’<sup>111</sup> – Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 1972

‘[I]nfrequently do those in the West who would like to help take the trouble to find out what it is, in fact, which does help’.<sup>112</sup> – Dwain C. Epps (in notes for a speech by Philip Potter), 1976

## Introduction

The founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 coincided with the onset of the Cold War. The WCC sought to remain aloof from the intensifying conflict between the wartime allies, and thus rebuffed the attempt by an envoy sent by President Truman, Myron C. Taylor, to enlist it in a spiritual alliance against communism. This distinguished the WCC’s position from that of Pope Pius XII, who had reciprocated Truman’s overtures by announcing that, in the historian Dianne Kirby’s words, ‘there could be no compromise with an avowed enemy of God’, namely the Soviet Union.<sup>113</sup> The rhetoric adopted by the Amsterdam Assembly’s section on ‘The Church and the International Disorder’ showed how the WCC attempted to preserve its neutrality. The section’s report concluded that

‘The greatest threat to peace to-day comes from the division into the world into mutually suspicious and antagonistic *blocs*. This threat is all the greater because national tensions are confused by the clash of economic and political systems. Christianity cannot be equated with any of these.’<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986) 304.

<sup>112</sup> Epps to Potter, 15 April 1976, 3, Archives of the World Council of Churches, Geneva (hereafter WCCA) CCIA 428.15.3.4.

<sup>113</sup> Dianne Kirby, ‘From Bridge to Divide: East-West Relations and Christianity during the Second World War and Early Cold War’, *International History Review*, 36, 4 (2014) 721-744, on 739.

<sup>114</sup> W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: The Official Report* (London: SCM Press, 1949) 91.

At the same time, the WCC was aware of the violations of religious freedom that were occurring as Eastern Europe was ‘Sovietized’, and it was mindful – despite the temporary relaxation in religious persecution in the Soviet Union during the wartime years – of the fate of the churches under Stalin. Under the chairmanship of the Anglican Bishop George Bell of Chichester, the WCC’s Central Committee issued statements critical of ‘totalitarian’ communism, especially with regard to religious freedom, and in support of the 1950 intervention in Korea under United Nations auspices.<sup>115</sup> Yet the WCC’s inclusion of Eastern European Christians who sympathized with or supported communism, and its desire to expand the ecumenical fellowship, held strongly by its General Secretary, the Dutch theologian W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, would lead it to soften its stance over time, and to decouple criticism on religious liberty from that of communism as a system.<sup>116</sup> While an initial courtship from 1945 to 1948 had failed, by the time of the 1954 Evanston Assembly, the WCC was on a path toward integrating the Russian Orthodox Church – an undertaking that would have momentous implications for its approach to religious liberty and human rights.

This chapter connects the history of ecumenical advocacy of religious liberty to the recent historiography on human rights and dissidence in the Soviet Union. The Soviet ‘dissident’ movement, though it had roots in the 1950s, took shape during the second half of the 1960s. Its gradual turn to human rights could be seen in events such as the 5 December 1965 demonstration on Pushkin Square against the closed trial of two writers; the 1968 establishment of the *Chronicle of Current Events*, and the 1969 founding of the Initiative Group on Human Rights in the USSR.<sup>117</sup> Most of the literature, however, has focused on the role of (often Jewish) intelligentsia, and, insofar it has taken up the question of religious freedom, on the question of Jewish emigration.<sup>118</sup> The role of Christians, their relationship to the state, and their demands for religious freedom, have often been left to a separate

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<sup>115</sup> See MRCC 1949, 15-16; MRCC 1950, 91-92. For an overview of this period, see Dianne Kirby, ‘The Impact of the Cold War on the Formation of the WCC’, in Joachim Garstecki, ed., *Die Ökumene und der Widerstand gegen Diktaturen. Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus als Herausforderung an die Kirchen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2007) 135-158. On Bell’s attitudes and their subsequent softening, see Dianne Kirby, ‘Bishop George Bell and the Cold War’, *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 21, 2 (2008) 329-372.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. the discussion in Justin Reynolds, ‘Against the World: International Protestantism and the Ecumenical Movement between Secularization and Politics’ (PhD dissertation: Columbia University, 2016) ch. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Benjamin Nathans, ‘Soviet Dissidents, Human Rights, and the New Global Morality’, in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2014) 33-48; Robert Horvath, ‘Breaking the Totalitarian Ice: The Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 36 (2014) 147-175.

<sup>118</sup> On the transnational movement for human rights in Eastern Europe in general, see Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). On Jewish emigration, see Nathan Kurz, ‘A Sphere Above the Nations? The Rise and Fall of International Jewish Human Rights Politics, 1945-1975’ (PhD dissertation: Yale University, 2015) ch. 5.



body of literature.<sup>119</sup> As this chapter shows, there were important differences in the trajectories of political and religious dissidence, but the two converged and were interrelated in many ways. The chapter traces the activities of the WCC and its internationally representative body, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), in relation to this story.

With respect to the ecumenical movement's activities, the period of the 1940s to the 1970s has hardly been studied as a whole, let alone with regard to human rights.<sup>120</sup> While the chapter draws on the available literature on this subject, it does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the ecumenical movement's engagement with Christians in the Soviet Union. Rather, using the archives of the WCC, complemented by published source materials on Soviet dissent, it focuses specifically to how human rights discourse featured in its promotion of religious liberty (there is important work to be done in determining the impact of the WCC's interventions, but this is also beyond the scope of this chapter). It should be noted at the outset that the WCC was not the only Protestant actor of its kind, the most important counterparts being the Baptist World Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation (and to a lesser extent the European Baptist Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches), as well as the WCC's close partner, the Conference of European Churches (CEC).<sup>121</sup> But the WCC was the largest among these actors, and the most important representative of the ecumenical movement. The chapter deals with the two religious groups most important to the WCC, the Russian Orthodox and Russian Baptists. These two confessions – the former by far the biggest and historically most significant in the USSR – were most relevant to the

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<sup>119</sup> See for a recent contribution Miriam Dobson, 'Protestants, Peace and the Apocalypse: The USSR's Religious Cold War, 1947-62', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53, 2 (2018) 361-390.

<sup>120</sup> The account that comes closest to such an overview – indeed the only one to deal with the entire period in depth and on the basis of archival research – is the book-length study by Armin Boyens, himself a participant in some of the events he describes. Unfortunately, Boyens's account is marred, particularly in its treatment of the late 1960s and beyond, by the author's partisan approach, which echoes critiques of the WCC at the time more than it provides a dispassionate analysis. Nonetheless, Boyens's study was helpful in gathering the archival materials used in this chapter, which covers much of the same historical ground but from a different angle. Armin Boyens, 'Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen und Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland zwischen West und Ost', in Gerhard Besier, Armin Boyens, and Gerhard Lindemann, *Nationaler Protestantismus und Ökumenische Bewegung: Kirchliches Handeln im Kalten Krieg (1945-1990)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999) 27-322. Cf. Heinz Joachim Held, *Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Visier der Kritik. Eine kritische Lektüre der Forschungsarbeit "ÖRK und EKD zwischen West und Ost"* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2001).

<sup>121</sup> In addition, there was the Christian Peace Conference, based in Prague, but it was aligned with the Eastern bloc peace movement and avoided criticism of socialist states. See Gerhard Lindemann, "'Sauerteig im Kreis der gesamtchristlichen Ökumene': Das Verhältnis zwischen der Christlichen Friedenskonferenz und dem Ökumenischen Rat der Kirchen", in Gerhard Besier, Armin Boyens, and Gerhard Lindemann, *Nationaler Protestantismus und Ökumenische Bewegung: Kirchliches Handeln im Kalten Krieg (1945-1990)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999) 653-932. On the Lutheran World Federation, see Risto Lehtonen, 'The Lutheran World Federation and the Cold War', in Jülius Filo, ed., *Christian World Community – and the Cold War: International Research Conference in Bratislava on 5 – 8 September 2011* (Bratislava: Comenius University, 2012) 193-238.

WCC's work.<sup>122</sup> The analysis thus leaves out other major groups such as Jews, Old Believers, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and of course the second-largest religious group in the USSR, Muslims, all of which featured only marginally.

## The Russian Orthodox Church from antagonist to member church

The most salient feature about the WCC's engagement for religious liberty in the USSR derived from its organizational nature: as a fellowship of member churches, the WCC sought, above all, to develop relations on the ecclesiastical level. This meant engaging with religious institutions whose views the WCC had to give appropriate weight to – to go against a member church could risk fragile and painstakingly established ecumenical bonds. While this did not mean that the WCC would never be critical of member churches, it predisposed it towards the viewpoint of ecclesiastical leaders. In cases where these leaders were at odds with individual clergy or believers, as would be the case in the USSR, the WCC thus faced diplomatically difficult situations. This was particularly so in the case of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Baptist Union, which faced sharp restrictions to their freedom and state encroachment on their decision-making.

Nadezda and Elena Beliakova have recently analyzed the development of relations between the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox Church using the concept of 'Sovietization', to describe the state's influence over the church hierarchy on one hand and its curtailment of Russian Orthodoxy on the other hand. The Russian Orthodox Church, reestablished in 1943, was controlled by the state through the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs, which would be renamed the Council on Religious Affairs (CRA) in 1965. The Russian Orthodox Church itself had a Department of Foreign Church Relations, which would become the main interlocutor in ecumenical contacts. From 1960 to 1972 it was led by Metropolitan Nikodim, a young clergyman who had risen remarkably rapidly through the hierarchy, replacing his predecessor, who was shunted aside for critiquing state religious policy. Nikodim, who would in 1975 become one of the WCC's presidents, has remained a controversial and to some extent inscrutable figure, not least owing to his sudden death from a heart attack in 1978, during an audience with the Pope. Christopher Andrew has written that Nikodim was an agent of the KGB, like many in the Orthodox hierarchy, but also that a CRA report from 1974

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<sup>122</sup> Jane Ellis notes that other Christian denominations, such as the Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Lithuanian Catholics, 'did not form organised movements for religious liberty until the 1970s'. Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 295. On Jehova's Witnesses in the Soviet Union, see Emily B. Baran, *Dissent on the Margins: How Soviet Jehova's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach about It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

identified his loyalty to the state as falling into a middle category of those who cooperated but sought to further church interests at the same time.<sup>123</sup> Beliakova and Beglov have argued that Nikodim avoided direct conflict with the state because he believed that while complying with the state's demands, he could ultimately force 'those in power to see the use of the existence of the Orthodox Church in sociopolitical life'.<sup>124</sup>

However, based on research in the archives of the CRA (those of the Russian Orthodox Church being unavailable), Nadezda Belyakova and Beglov Aleksej have argued that the interests of state and church diverged from early on: 'the Church made its priority inter-Orthodox connections', while the state prioritized creating 'a positive image of the Soviet state and the peacemaking efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church', including (under Khrushchev and Brezhnev) projecting an image of unfettered religious freedom in the USSR.<sup>125</sup> Nikodim's acquiescent attitude towards the state, as well as that of other church leaders, would lead to private and, later, public criticism by Orthodox believers. (It should be noted that even before Nikodim's ascendancy, not all Orthodox Christians acquiesced in the centralization of the Church: a movement of 'True Orthodox', also known as the 'catacomb church', preferred an underground, illegal existence. This loosely organized network exerted a formative influence on many later religious dissidents.)

Such open dissent was not present from the start. In the 1950s, there was no Russian Orthodox dissent to speak of, nor were there official links between the WCC and the Russian Orthodox Church. Though the high point of religious freedom in the Soviet Union had been the mid-1940s, when Stalin needed the support of religious communities for domestic and international purposes, the postwar years and the initial years after Stalin's death had seen a relatively benign policy on religion – in sharp contrast to the antireligious campaigns of the 1930s, which had brought Christianity in the USSR to its knees. Jane Ellis has written that it was only with Khrushchev's renewed antireligious campaign, which started around 1958 and lasted until his downfall in 1964, that Russian Orthodox Church members began to voice opinions contrary to the Moscow Patriarchate's line, and even then, 'their existence was not noticed abroad until many years after that'.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Christopher Andrews and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Allen Lane, 1999) 636 and 640-641.

<sup>124</sup> Translation mine. Nadezda Beliakova and Elena Beliakova, 'Die "Sowjetisierung" der Russisch Orthodoxen Kirche', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 30, 1 (2017) 207-221, on 216.

<sup>125</sup> Nadezda Belyakova and Beglov Aleksej, 'International Activity of the Russian Orthodox Church during the Cold War: The Results and the Future Prospects of Study', in Filo, ed., *Christian World Community*, 171-192, on 179.

<sup>126</sup> Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986) 290.

A few years earlier, the WCC had undertaken renewed overtures towards the Russian Orthodox Church, beginning at its 1954 Evanston Assembly. There were fences to be mended: in 1948, the Russian Orthodox Church had denounced the WCC as Western-aligned. From 1948 to 1950, the WCC had made statements that did indeed lean towards the foreign policy stance of the emergent Western bloc, and issued relatively strong denunciations of communism (though still shy of the Vatican's position). These included articulations of religious freedom as a human right, connected to civil and political rights. The WCC's 1949 Chichester meeting had issued a statement on religious liberty in Eastern Europe; in 1950 the WCC had issued a statement on religious liberty and a study on 'Religious liberty in face of dominant forces', including prominent attention to communism; and the WCC's 1950 Toronto statement had expressed support for the UN intervention in Korea.<sup>127</sup> But in a series of exploratory exchanges and meetings during the second half of the 1950s, the WCC sought to improve relations with the Russian Orthodox Church. Meanwhile, the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church had also changed: it was eager to develop international contacts, and now found itself supported in this by the state, which sought to use such contacts to its own benefit. The WCC, for its part, realized that the entry of the Russian Orthodox and other Eastern Churches would lead to political problems because of state interference, but saw its membership as integral to the ecumenical fellowship and nurtured the hope that it might lead to improvements in the area of religious liberty.<sup>128</sup>

During exploratory contacts, religious freedom was discussed. On 21 February 1955, Metropolitan Nikolai responded to the Evanston Assembly's general statement on the issue of religious liberty by taking to the offense, criticizing 'state churches, i.e. the ruling churches, [which] persecute people of other faiths with the help of state authority' (a jab at the Roman Catholic Church). Nikodim explained, reflecting official doctrine, that in the USSR, 'the unhindered activity of the churches is limited by the law that at the same time excludes any intervention in the life of the Church from outside'. Responding in April 1955, the WCC sent a letter to the Moscow Patriarchate with the purpose of inviting the Russian Orthodox Church to meet. The letter included, among more prominently placed questions of peace and ecumenical fellowship, a paragraph on religious liberty. It framed the issue in religious terms: 'In view of our conception of man and his relation to God, we

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<sup>127</sup> See Dianne Kirby, 'The Impact of the Cold War on the Formation of the WCC', in Joachim Garstecki, ed., *Die Ökumene und der Widerstand gegen Diktaturen: Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus als Herausforderung an die Kirchen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2007) 135-158.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 156.

recognize that religious liberty (to which you already refer in your letter) is the fundamental freedom.’ But the letter continued by expressing concern at religious persecution in general terms, without singling out the USSR, and ended by providing a more detailed definition of religious liberty. In doing so, it used the exact language of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration, though without reference to it (and omitting the wording on freedom to change one’s religion, indicating that this was not the WCC’s concern in the Soviet case). The WCC’s leaders wrote that ‘[o]n this matter also we feel that frank conversation is necessary.’<sup>129</sup>

Such exchanges served as the most important way for the WCC to address religious liberty in the USSR, while it sought to avoid uttering public criticism. The WCC’s leadership was sensitive early on to the risks inherent in openly criticizing religious liberty in the USSR. In 1951, discussing the possibility of initiating dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, the WCC’s General Secretary, the Dutchman W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, wrote to Bishop George Bell of Chichester, then chairman of the WCC’s Central Committee, about the need to avoid antagonizing the Soviet authorities: ‘one of the main reasons against a public debate with Moscow is certainly that such a debate would almost certainly force the Churches behind the iron curtain to choose between Moscow and the World Council’.<sup>130</sup> Writing about religious persecution in 1949, the CCIA’s British chairman, Kenneth G. Grubb, recognized the utility of the Universal Declaration, but worried about the ‘futility of remonstrances when once persecution has been openly declared’, as in Eastern Europe.<sup>131</sup> Such concerns remained throughout the decade. In a 1960 exchange about how best to aid the Russian Baptists of the AUCECB, the important American CCIA staff member Richard M. Fagley wrote that ‘[p]ublic references in the West are regarded as likely to do more harm than good. The same consideration applies to church delegations from the West – whether they help or hurt the situation depends on what they say on their return.’<sup>132</sup>

National church delegations to the USSR, which visited with increasing frequency during the mid- to late-1950s ‘thaw’ in East-West relations on, could go further in their criticism. An important example was a 1956 deputation of the American ecumenical body, the National Council of the

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<sup>129</sup> Francis House, ‘The World Council of Churches and the Patriarchate of Moscow: Documents for use in preparing for the meeting with delegates of the Patriarchate proposed for August 1958’, April 1958, 22 and 26, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/Meeting with Moscow Patriarchate, Utrecht, 7-9 August 1958.

<sup>130</sup> Visser ‘t Hooft to Bell, 26 February 1951, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/CCIA USSR 1948-52.

<sup>131</sup> Grubb, ‘Persecution’, 1949, 7, WCCA CCIA 428.4.3.

<sup>132</sup> Fagley, ‘Confidential. Baptist Situation in Russia’, 14 November 1960, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/USSR from 1957-.

Churches of Christ in the United States of America (NCCCUSA), the WCC's most important constituent. During the official meetings, NCCCUSA leader Walter Van Kirk strongly came out in defense of human rights, echoing postwar rhetoric about international order: 'Our churches believe that the establishment of a just and durable peace cannot be fully achieved apart from the establishment and safeguarding of human rights. Among the Christian requirements of world order is a recognition of the dignity of the human person as the image of God, and the granting to all men of the rights and liberties compatible with this conception of human worth.'<sup>133</sup> Later on, an American bishop explained how American churches took part in civil society and criticized the government – the 'churches have a prophetic function, a responsibility, when needed, to be the conscience of the nation' – and the Soviet churchmen set out why their church did not have the ambition to do more than 'the saving of souls – through worship, preaching, confessing and visiting homes'. The deputation could thus only conclude that 'no agreement had been reached as to what constitutes "the mission" of the churches'.<sup>134</sup> Meetings with the CRA persuaded the Americans that 'church and state have reached at least a temporary accommodation'. Yet they also stressed that in many ways churches were curtailed, 'most severe[ly]' in the realm of education, but also in terms of publishing literature, and more generally in any area beyond that of 'worship'.<sup>135</sup> Reiterating their conception of human rights in a joint communiqué, the American deputation showed itself willing to speak out publicly in favor of human rights, in a way that set out general principles but implied clear criticism of the Soviet Union's record.

As a set of WCC-Orthodox meetings progressed towards an Orthodox application for membership, religious liberty remained part of discussions, but the improvement of relations was the overriding priority. A 3-18 December 1959 visit by the WCC to Moscow, for instance, 'was not designed to deal with political or international problems but had as its specific purpose the promotion of better understanding'. Nolde's summary of the WCC's expressed positions indicated that the delegation had met with both church and state officials. Disarmament and decolonization were discussed, and the WCC delegation touched on religious and other civil and political liberties in this connection: 'If the churches are to play their responsible part, they must be free to advance their views before action is taken by governments and equally free to criticize any government when its actions

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<sup>133</sup> NCCCUSA, 'American Churchmen Visit the Soviet Union', n.d. [1956], 16, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/U.S.S.R. (Up to 1956).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>135</sup> NCCCUSA, 'American Churchmen Visit the Soviet Union', n.d. [1956], 14, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/U.S.S.R. (Up to 1956).

threaten peace, justice, and freedom.’ Moreover, ‘churches and individual Christians’ required ‘access to objective and reliable information’. But insofar as such ‘political or international problems’ came up over the course of the visit, ‘there was no intention or effort to secure agreement on them’. Rather, ‘[i]n face of the historical situation, agreements should not be pressed but should be encouraged to emerge as a result of growing mutual understanding and confidence’.<sup>136</sup>

Reporting on the same visit, Visser ‘t Hooft noted how difficult it was to acquire reliable information on the state of churches in the Soviet Union and indicated how fruitless attempts at dialogue with officials seemed. On the administration of churches, he reported that there was great latitude for ‘arbitrary action’ because of decentralization, ‘a disadvantage for the churches, because the local official is generally more difficult to deal with than the central Church Affairs Administration in Moscow’. In conversation with a CRA official, who asked him for his opinion on the Soviet separation of church and state, Visser ‘t Hooft responded that he ‘could only regret strongly that the separation of Church and State was not carried out fully’, by removing the prohibition of ‘catechism, youth associations or Sunday school’. He ‘only asked that the Christians would have exactly the same freedom of propaganda that the anti-religious people had’. The official responded that they had ‘different convictions’ and directed the conversation toward more anodyne subjects.<sup>137</sup> Such seemed to be the general pattern: Soviet officials would not enter into a dialogue that would have permitted WCC representatives to really argue with their position.

On the position of the Russian Orthodox Church vis-à-vis the Soviet state, Visser ‘t Hooft wrote at the time that

‘[i]t remains a tremendous fact that the Russian Orthodox Church *exists* and that is not all for it is also important that the church has not become a syncretistic body such as were the [Nazi-aligned] Deutsche Christen in the National-socialist period in Germany. One does not get the impression that any attempt is made to create a synthesis between Christianity and Marxist ideology.’

In this sense he could appreciate the Soviet ‘separation of state and church’. Yet Visser ‘t Hooft also noted that the Orthodox churchmen had come to accept the limits placed on it as a fact of life, for the time being at least. For instance, when asked about evangelization, ‘they would say that the Church itself is the evangelistic fact’. Thus, Visser ‘t Hooft concluded, ‘the Church is a worshipping church, a

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<sup>136</sup> Nolde, ‘Summary of Certain Observations on International Affairs by the World Council of Churches Delegation to the Churches of Russia’, 19 December 1959, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1965-/Russian Visitation 3-18 December 1959.

<sup>137</sup> Visser ‘t Hooft, ‘Report on the visit of a World Council of Churches delegation to the Orthodox Church and other Churches in the U.S.S.R., December 1959’, 23 December 1959, 6, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1965-/Russian Visitation 3-18 December 1959.

conserving church and a waiting church, but not an outgoing church'.<sup>138</sup> This only stoked Visser 't Hooft's eagerness to extend the ecumenical fellowship to the Russian Orthodox Church, which might rekindle a flame in it. From the perspective of the WCC's promotion of religious liberty, however, it meant that only little engagement from the Orthodox Church itself could be expected. Should the WCC then take the lead in criticizing the state, or prodding the Orthodox Church into stronger opposition? The WCC's answer to this was negative: the leaders of the Orthodox Church, as the WCC's (prospective) brothers in the ecumenical fellowship, should be allowed to indicate – insofar as possible – what best served their needs.

On 4 November 1960, Nikodim announced that he would initiate the necessary steps towards a Russian Orthodox Church application for WCC membership by the next year. A somewhat bewildered Visser 't Hooft and a colleague suggested that this might be overly quick, and 1962 or 1963 might allow them to prepare the WCC's constituency for this major step, but Nikodim insisted that 'the time has come *now*'.<sup>139</sup> As the WCC worked with the Russian Orthodox Church to prepare for admission at the WCC's New Delhi Assembly at the end of 1961, church-state relations and religious liberty became areas in which leaders of both were concerned resistance to Russian Orthodox Church admission might arise. As a joint meeting noted, the 'main point on which public attention is likely to be focussed (...) is likely to be the contention that the Russian church leaders and delegates to the W.C.C. meetings do not represent the church but the Soviet Government'. As to religious freedom in the USSR, the meeting committed itself to defending the position that 'living Christian churches exist in the Communist countries', an ambiguous statement, but perhaps one that best captured the ambivalence the WCC leadership itself harbored: the churches in the Soviet Union were repressed and to a degree controlled by the state's pressure, but precisely for this reason they were to be supported.<sup>140</sup>

This imperative was also borne out by a short memorandum dated 11 October 1961, in which the WCC's staff member and advisor Alexander de Weymarn compiled a few general observations indicating the repression of Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign, such as the closing of churches, monasteries, and seminaries. In de Weymarn's view, 'these developments strengthen the case for

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>139</sup> Francis House, 'Strictly confidential. Notes of conversation at the World Council headquarters on November 4, 1960', 7 November 1960, 3, WCCA General Secretariat (hereafter GS) 42.4.069/1.

<sup>140</sup> 'Strictly confidential. Minute of discussion in closed session on the visit to Geneva of Bishop Nikodim', 6-10 February 1961, WCCA GS 42.4.070/2. A second meeting, on 10 March 1961, focused only on technical issues. See Francis House, 'Strictly confidential. Notes of Conversations with Bishop Nikodim, Head of the Department of Foreign Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate', 10 March 1961, WCCA GS 42.4.070/2.



accepting the Russian application'. Within the Russian Orthodox Church there were 'compromisers and collaborators' as well as 'believers and resisters', and the latter should be given 'all the help we can'. This would become 'extremely difficult if not completely impossible' without official contacts, though these contacts should be supplemented by cautiously publicizing religious repression and by asking 'the churches to pray for the Christians in Russia'.<sup>141</sup> Based on this rationale, the WCC's leadership defended the Russian Orthodox Church's entry, and successfully shepherded its application for membership through the New Delhi Assembly. This then also led the Baptist Union, formally the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), to apply the next year, which would be accepted in 1963. Its Secretary, Jacob Zhidkov, told visiting American ecumenists that the reason for not applying earlier had to do with the AUCECB's links to the Southern Baptists in America, who spurned the WCC. The Russian Orthodox Church's membership, however, tipped the scales in favor of developing a closer relationship with the WCC.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the WCC had entered a new period, in which both the state-recognized Russian Orthodox and Baptist churches were members. Soon after, as is discussed in the next section, religious dissent rose to the surface and became internationally known. This meant that besides its meetings with Russian church leaders, the WCC would now have to decide how to respond to the appeals of religious dissidents.<sup>143</sup>

## The rise of Russian Orthodox and Baptist Dissidence

### *Russian Orthodox Christians*

The Russian Orthodox Church was, despite the arbitrary nature of Soviet legality, in continuous dialogue with the state in terms of law, because Soviet laws on religion circumscribed the space for its existence yet could also be used to contest state encroachment.<sup>144</sup> The WCC's attempts at exerting pressure referenced Soviet legislation as well, but often added references to international standards such as the Universal Declaration. At the same time, the CCIA was careful not to cross into outright denunciation, preferring to articulate its concerns diplomatically and as inquiries about reports it had received (though it did not have clear-cut policy on when to respond and when not). For

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<sup>141</sup> WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/USSR 1955-6, A. de Weymarn, 'On the church situation in the U.S.S.R.', 11 October 1961, 2 [note that the letter is signed only 'W.', but a handwritten note suggests this indicated de Weymarn].

<sup>142</sup> R.H. Edwin Espy to Visser 't Hooft, 19 December 1961, WCCA GS 42.4.074/3.

<sup>143</sup> The 1964 Odessa meeting of the WCC Executive Committee was perhaps the most important exception to this.

<sup>144</sup> See e.g. Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (Armonk, NY, 2002) 144.

example, in 1962 and 1963, the WCC responded to threats to two Russian Orthodox monasteries. At the Monastery of St. Job at Pochaev, near Lutzk, in the Western Ukraine, monks were reportedly intimidated and coerced into abandoning their home, and visitors threatened to discourage them from returning. On 28 December 1962, Nolde wrote a letter to Luka Y. Kizya, head of the Permanent Mission of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to the UN, in which he outlined some of the allegations of government action ‘against the believers and the monks’ (though Nolde noted that the CCIA did not believe that it was the government’s intention to close the monastery). Nolde mentioned the WCC as well as the UN, but restricted himself to a request to Kizya to ‘ascertain for us whether or not these allegations are correct’, and if so, to work towards ‘measures to ameliorate it’.<sup>145</sup> This intervention seemed to be effective, at least to a degree: the monastery was ultimately allowed to remain open, with some thirty monks remaining.<sup>146</sup>

As Khrushchev’s antireligious campaign wore on, Orthodox dissent grew, and it developed links to the secular intelligentsia that was the source of an emergent dissident movement at the same time. A key moment in the rise of Orthodox dissent was the November-December 1965 set of open letters by Nikolai Eshliman and Gleb Yakunin, both Orthodox priests. The letters – addressed to the Patriarch and to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, respectively, but sent to all Moscow bishops – protested the steps taken during Khrushchev’s antireligious campaign to strengthen the state’s control over the Church. In particular, the writers decried the 1961 synodal decree, which had established so-called Councils of Twenty to govern parishes, with the effect of extending lay influence over churches. These lay Councils were easily subject to state infiltration and pressure, leaving clergy in a vulnerable position. The response to the letters came from the Church itself: the Patriarch asked the authors to rescind their criticism, and when they refused to do so, suspended them from the priesthood.<sup>147</sup>

According to Nickolas Lupinin, the Eshliman and Yakunin letters ‘had enormous impact. Many from the secular intelligentsia responded favourably and some were even motivated to convert’.<sup>148</sup> Perhaps the most important personal link between the nascent dissident movement and

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<sup>145</sup> Nolde to H.E. Mr. Luka Y. Kizya, 28 December 1962, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/73. U.S.S.R. 1960-63.

<sup>146</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People: The Christian Religion in the U.S.S.R.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965) 231.

<sup>147</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia: Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy* (London et al.: Macmillan and St. Martin’s Press, 1968) 184-186.

<sup>148</sup> Nickolas Lupinin, ‘The Russian Orthodox Church’, in Lucian N. Leustean, *Eastern Christianity and the Cold War, 1945-91* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) 19-39, on 29.

Orthodox advocates for religious freedom at this time was Anatoli Levitin, who wrote under the pseudonym of A. Krasnov. An Orthodox layman, Levitin was, according to Bourdeaux, ‘the most outspoken opponent of the campaign against the church during the later Khrushchev period’, and a vigorous supporter of Eshliman and Yakunin. This, and his chastising of the Orthodox hierarchy for its lack of resistance to the state, earned him a ‘severe attack’ by the Soviet antireligious journal *Nauka i Religia* in 1966, which only raised his profile still further.<sup>149</sup> Levitin’s signature on the Initiative Group on Human Rights in the USSR’s 20 May 1969 petition to the UN identified him as a ‘religious writer’, the only obviously religious affiliation among the signatories and supporters.<sup>150</sup> Soon after, Levitin was detained for eleven months. In 1971, the *Chronicle of Current Events* reported that he had again been arrested and tried. Sakharov was allowed to attend the trial, and Yakunin was among the witnesses for the defense.<sup>151</sup> Levitin was imprisoned again until 1974, after which he emigrated.<sup>152</sup>

One of Levitin’s publications was entitled ‘Freedom of Belief and of Atheism: Face to Face’, which reported on an alleged 21 May 1965 meeting between the author and ‘representatives of anti-religious opinion in a room of the Zhdanov District Executive Committee on Taganka Square’, including ‘two important officials of the KGB’. According to the text, an individual named Chertikhin, ‘head of the Political Publishing House’, had accused Levitin of writing ‘that the Declaration on Human Rights adopted by the delegates of Eisenhower and Churchill is the basis of socialism’, which Levitin had denied having written. Someone called Romanov, ‘deputy director of the House of Atheism’, had pressed Levitin by quoting from a letter he had written to Nikodim: “‘It is necessary to publish the Declaration widely, to bring all legislation into correspondence with it and to structure all daily activities according to it. That is the basis of socialist democracy.’” Levitin had replied by asking, rhetorically, ‘What democracy can actually be meant when the most important document setting out the principles to have been signed and ratified has not only not been put into practice, but has not even been published?’ The discussion had then shifted to the Soviet constitution.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, if Levitin’s account was accurate in reflecting his references to human rights, these came remarkably early – ahead of the late-1960s efflorescence of such language in the dissident movement.

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<sup>149</sup> Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment*, 187-188.

<sup>150</sup> George Saunders, ed., *Samizdat: Voices of the Soviet Opposition* (New York: Monad Press, 1974) 368.

<sup>151</sup> ‘The Trial of Anatoly Levitin-Krasnov’, *A Chronicle of Current Events*, 20 (1971), <https://chronicleofcurrentevents.net/2016/03/22/20-6-the-trial-of-anatoly-levitin-krasnov/> (accessed 29 March 2018).

<sup>152</sup> Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981) 150.

<sup>153</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets: Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church* (London: Macmillan, 1969) 268.

A milestone in the convergence between Christianity and the intelligentsia came with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's 1972 publication of a so-called 'Lenten Letter' to the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Pimen. As Vladislav Zubok has written, Solzhenitsyn was an 'Orthodox believer and a conservative Russian nationalist', but at the same time his work commanded the admiration of even the mostly liberal, outward-looking intelligentsia.<sup>154</sup> In the letter to Pimen, Solzhenitsyn sharply reproached the Orthodox hierarchy for submitting to the state, particularly in matters such as education, baptism, and the shortage of churches. The right way, Solzhenitsyn claimed, would be for the church to '*sacrifice*. Though deprived of all material strength, it is always victorious in *sacrifice*.' A reply by an Orthodox priest, Father Sergi Zheludkov, illustrated the hierarchy's position: it should 'try somehow to accept the system and for the present [make] use of those opportunities that are permitted'.<sup>155</sup>

Though Zheludkov's response could be read as merely a cynical defense of the Church's adaptation to the regime, Ellis has argued that the debate around the letter also showed the range of Orthodox views on the proper course of action for the church vis-à-vis the state. She suggests that the underlying conflict was 'between those who believed', as Zheludkov did, 'that the church must be preserved as an institution and those who believed', like Solzhenitsyn, 'that the church was above all a metaphysical body'.<sup>156</sup> A third position, articulated by the layman Felix Karelin, sided with Solzhenitsyn's criticism but drew from this not the conclusion that the church should speak out, but, in Ellis' words, rather that it should refrain 'from action, negating self in order to serve as the instrument of God'. In Ellis' view, Karelin's position was the one more in line with 'the mainstream of traditional Orthodox thought'.<sup>157</sup>

The WCC's response to Solzhenitsyn's letter showed it balancing between the need to respect the priorities of the institutional church (thus tending towards Zheludkov's position), and the opportunity to use the letter as an opening to raise issues of religious freedom. Shortly after the letter was sent, Visser 't Hooft visited the USSR and met with Metropolitan Alexis, Metropolitan Nikodim, and the CRA's Makartsev. The former WCC General Secretary, now honorary president, expressed his understanding for the Russian Orthodox Church's critical reception of Solzhenitsyn's letter. Solzhenitsyn 'seemed not to understand the real dilemma in which the church leaders in Russia found

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<sup>154</sup> Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) 309.

<sup>155</sup> Quoted in Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 304-305.

<sup>156</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 304-305.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 306-307.

themselves'. But, Visser 't Hooft continued, coming to his real point, 'he had raised a number of concrete issues which had to be discussed openly, such as the closing of churches, the registration of baptisms, religious instruction of young people, etc.'. Alexis responded by denouncing Solzhenitsyn as 'not a loyal Orthodox Christian' and disputed the information he had provided about the church in the Soviet Union. Visser 't Hooft pressed him on a few points, without much success, but noted that at the end of the conversation, Alexis had seemed eager for him to speak to Makartsev, '[s]o he seemed after all to think that my approach could be significant for the Orthodox Church'.<sup>158</sup>

Meeting with Makartsev, Visser 't Hooft explained that he was glad, ten years on, that the Russian Orthodox Church had joined the WCC, but he registered his 'regret' that since 1961, 'not more progress had been made toward full religious freedom in Russia'. Moreover, Solzhenitsyn's letter and the onset of discussions on European security and cooperation meant that this question was now not only an ecclesiastical but 'also and preeminently a political matter'. Western church leaders would, if they were to take a 'constructive' position in these discussions, require 'real facts proving that the Russian government moved towards greater freedom in its own policies'. In response, Makartsev launched into an attack on Solzhenitsyn and a defense of religious freedom policy in the USSR.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, Visser 't Hooft came away from his visit with the conclusion that Solzhenitsyn's letter, though potentially liable to invite a response by the state against the Russian Orthodox Church, could be valuable if Western Christians 'use it as an opportunity to enter into frank discussion with government officials and Christians of Russia and to ask concrete questions about the real obstacles which the churches in Russia meet in the fulfilling of their mission'.<sup>160</sup> Thus, the WCC did not merely acquiesce in the Russian Orthodox Church's position along the lines laid out by Zheludkov, but took a more proactively critical stance.

When Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the USSR in 1974, similar exchanges to the one around the Lenten letter erupted. The WCC protested the expulsion, lauding Solzhenitsyn's 'courageous stand for human freedom through his concern to help his people face the realities of the past'.<sup>161</sup> But in Moscow, the Orthodox Archpriest Vsevolod Shpiller took aim at Solzhenitsyn, stating in an interview with the Novosti Press Agency that Solzhenitsyn could not be considered a Christian writer, because he had a "conception of the world, of man, and of life primarily through the prism of the evil in it –

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<sup>158</sup> Visser 't Hooft, 'Conversations About the Letter of Solzhenitsyn', April 1972, 2-3, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>161</sup> Ecumenical Press Service (hereafter EPS), 'Solzhenitsyn', 15 February 1974, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

no, this is not a Christian outlook”<sup>162</sup> Was this the hierarchy lashing out, through an intermediary, at its most public critic? Shpiller himself was not uncritically loyal to the Orthodox hierarchy: he had himself petitioned Metropolitan Nikodim in 1965, protesting the 1961 exclusion of parish priests from the Councils of Twenty as ‘an uncanonical act’, though in a more restrained manner than Yakunin and Eshliman.<sup>163</sup> Ellis has analyzed the dispute in terms of the traditional Orthodox conception of ‘churchliness’, and the related concept of ‘conciliarity’ [sic], which did ‘not demand that the gifts and talents of the individual be suppressed, but that they may be exercised only after he has undergone the kenotic experience of denying self and surrendering himself to the collective mind of the church’.<sup>164</sup> From this perspective, Shpiller’s position seems to accord most closely with Karelin’s as described above, in emphasizing the prudence the church should exercise as to when to enter the political realm, whereas Yakunin and Eshliman were closer to Solzhenitsyn’s position, in valuing sacrificial Christian witness over the integrity of the Church as an institution. From the perspective of Yakunin and Eshliman, though, Shpiller’s decision to speak out against Solzhenitsyn, rather than keep silent, had served the interests of the state.<sup>165</sup>

To those Orthodox who prioritized the institutional integrity of the Russian Orthodox Church, it was precisely dissidents like Yakunin and Eshliman who acted irresponsibly. An important representative of this viewpoint was Archpriest Vitali Borovoi, the principal Orthodox staff member at the WCC. In 1967, when Blake asked Borovoi to ascertain the credibility of a number of Christian appeals coming from the USSR, Borovoi produced a lengthy memorandum in which he showed himself skeptical of their truthfulness. He alleged – based on unnamed sources – that the 1965 Eshliman-Yakunin letters had in fact been written by Levitin and a certain Felix Korelin, both laymen, whose character Borovoi called into question. Borovoi wrote that in fact, Eshliman and Yakunin had themselves realized that their letter had violated custom and canon law and thus given offense, ‘and following the advice of many of their true friends intended to be reconciled with the Patriarch and to ask his forgiveness for the way they had acted’. Moreover, their punishment (suspension from priesthood) had been conspicuously light. Yet pressure from ‘the group behind them’, such as Levitin and Korelin, had persuaded them to send a letter to the Patriarch, Holy Synod, and Council of Bishops, appealing their suspension, and this appeal ‘was published abroad in many newspapers and was sent

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<sup>162</sup> Quoted in Philip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in Soviet Russia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 111.

<sup>163</sup> Paul Verghese, ‘Strictly Confidential. Not to be filed’, 12 June 1967, WCCA GS 42.3.125/2.

<sup>164</sup> Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 323.

<sup>165</sup> Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform*, 111.

by Archbishop Anthony [the European Exarch of the Orthodox Church in London] to the World Council of Churches'.<sup>166</sup> Borovoi's analysis gained in authority from his recognition that most allegations about the state of religion in Soviet society were accurate: he did not play down the threat the churches faced. Rather, Borovoi argued that appeals such as those written by Levitin could serve the interests of the state, because it wanted 'to stimulate rivalry and accusations within the Church and to create divisions and schisms and to be in the position of "judge" and "supporter" of this'. Borovoi had in mind here the history of the 'Living Church' schism of 1922-1946 (of which, he wrote, Levitin had been part), which the state had quickly exploited for its purposes.<sup>167</sup> Thus, Borovoi's advice militated against supporting appeals such as Eshliman's and Yakunin's and emphasized the importance of preserving the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church. The conflicting viewpoints the WCC received from Borovoi and other Orthodox sources made it difficult to take a strong position either way, inviting a cautious approach by the WCC.

### *Baptists*

Baptists in the Soviet Union were forced to register their congregations with the state-recognized All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), which many refused to do, creating an illegal subset of Baptist congregations. In response to two 1960 documents published by the All-Union Council, which sought to regulate church life, including church-state relations, reform-minded Baptists began putting pressure on the Council. They created the Organizing Committee for an All-Union Congress of Evangelical Baptists, leading them to become known as *Initsiativniki*. The organization of such a congress had hitherto been denied by the authorities. In response to their pressure, on 15 October 1963, an All-Union Council congress was held, an attempt by the government to defuse the reform Baptists' demands and prevent a schism.<sup>168</sup> Yet the independent Baptists refused to recognize the congress and instead established the Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christian Baptists (CCECB), in September 1965.<sup>169</sup> By the mid-1960s more than half of all Baptists had joined this officially unrecognized Council, though numbers would decline sharply over time.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, in February 1964, reform Baptists had established the Council

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<sup>166</sup> Vitali Borovoi to E. Carson Blake, 'Strictly confidential and personal', 9 January 1967, 5, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>168</sup> Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985) 204-205.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

of Baptist Prisoners' Relatives, which not only drew families of prisoners into a network and gathered information but also petitioned the state for the prisoners' release.<sup>171</sup> According to Walter Sawatsky, 1966 was the year of most severe repression of the *Initsiativniki*, with 128 arrests, including 21 key leaders, bringing the total number of prisoners to 202. But Baptist dissidence kept growing. In 1970 the Council of Baptist Prisoners' Relatives launched a *Bulletin* disseminated as *samizdat*, and the CCECB even established its own publishing house, printing 'Bibles and other literature'.<sup>172</sup>

A key moment in Baptist dissidence was a 14 April 1965 open letter to Brezhnev by Gennadi Kryuchkov and Georgi Vins, both Baptist pastors, who served as president and secretary, respectively, of the dissident Organizing Committee. The letter prominently appealed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a standard the Soviet constitution should adhere to. The authors provided an overview of Soviet constitutional history on the point of religion, and quoted paragraph 124 of the Soviet constitution: 'In order to guarantee freedom of conscience for all citizens, the church in the USSR has been separated from the state and the school from the church. The freedom to hold religious services and the freedom of anti-religious propaganda is acknowledged to all citizens.' This formulation, the authors charged, 'does not correspond to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the U.N. on 10 December 1948, and signed by the governments of the world, including ours' (a common misconception – the USSR had in fact abstained from the vote). The letter went on to quote Articles 18 and 19 in full, and continued to point out that paragraph 124 'does not even correspond to the convention, "Concerning the struggle against discrimination in the field of education", adopted by the U.N. in 1960' (the convention was in fact not adopted by the UN but by UNESCO), because it allowed for anti-religious propaganda but not religious propaganda. Furthermore, it did not protect the right of parents to 'guarantee the religious and moral upbringing of their children in accordance with their own convictions' (as the text quoted the convention's Article 5, which it stated had become 'effective in the USSR on 1 November 1962').<sup>173</sup> Thus, like Levitin's 1965 letter to Nikodim, but in a much more emphatic way, the Kryuchkov-Vins letter to Brezhnev showed an awareness, if patchy, of international human rights documents and a willingness to use (supposed) Soviet acceptance of these documents to press for constitutional reform. Like Levitin's letter, it came just ahead of the upswing in human rights language of the late 1960s.

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<sup>171</sup> Katherine Murray, 'The Council of Baptist Prisoners' Relatives: 1964-1972', *Religion in Communist Lands*, 1 (1973) 12-15, on 12.

<sup>172</sup> Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, 148-149.

<sup>173</sup> Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment*, 110-111.



Several other important petitions followed. In 1967, reform Baptists appealed to the UN and to Soviet authorities, describing the curtailment of religious freedom and the imprisonment of Baptists, of whom over 200 were named. When the appeal was passed on to the WCC by Western sources (and made public), Blake wrote to Ilia Ivanov, President of the AUCECB, to say that ‘we receive here many questions about it. It would be of great help if you could let us know how this letter is to be evaluated.’ Blake went on to write that he deplored the ‘break’ within the Baptist Union and offered the WCC’s help in bringing the reform Baptists and the AUCECB towards restored unity.<sup>174</sup> A few days later, Micheli sent a letter to the CRA’s Makartsev, in which he raised the issue and asked for Makartsev’s response to the allegations. Micheli made clear what the WCC’s position was:

‘While the concern of the World Council of Churches embraces the unity of its member churches, our primary purpose in addressing you relates to the question of religious liberty as a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.’

According to Micheli, Makartsev himself had recently, ‘in conversation with Dr. Eugene Carson Blake (...) expressed approval of our statements [on religious liberty]’. Micheli pointed out that the allegations ran counter to ‘the general policy you have explained to us’, and coupled his request for Makartsev ‘to interpret the present situation for us’ with the statement that ‘we stand ready to take such steps as may be appropriate’.<sup>175</sup>

Rather than acknowledge the dissidents’ demands, the AUCECB launched an attack on them. In December 1967, the leaders of the AUCECB, Ivanov and Alexander V. Karev, wrote an open letter to their ‘Dear Christian Friends’ – including if not specifically intended for the WCC – in which it sought to dispel the notion of a serious split among the Russian Baptists as the product of ‘rumours, spread by the [sic] people entirely unacquainted with the actual situation’. According to the AUCECB, the *Initsiavniki* had proven themselves unreasonable at every turn, and had rejected ‘the loyalty of our Union to the laws of the Soviet State on religion, as a retreat from God’. Moreover, ‘they also blame our Union for the association with the World Council of Churches’; the letter quoted the *Initsiavniki* (without providing a source) as describing the WCC, “‘that unites all religious trends’” as the “‘Babylon of our days – the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth’”. The AUCECB also downplayed religious persecution in the Soviet Union, arguing that ‘People are not prosecuted in our country for their religious convictions, but to our deep regret, some brothers and sisters have been made

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<sup>174</sup> Blake to Ilia Ivanov, 10 November 1967, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/USSR from 1957-.

<sup>175</sup> Micheli to Peter Makartsev, 16 November 1967, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1948-65/USSR from 1957-.

answerable for non-observance of the laws on religion and for breach of the public order'. According to Ivanov and Karev, the *Initsiativniki* were an ephemeral phenomenon, who had achieved 'insignificant' results, and would ultimately vanish while the AUCECB would keep steadily 'moving forward'.<sup>176</sup> Similar points were made by Michael Zhidkov on a weeklong visit to Britain, not long after the above letter was sent (Zhidkov was a son of the AUCECB's Jacob Zhidkov, who had died in 1966). The Baptist Ernest Payne, one of the WCC's six presidents, and Dr. Ronald Goulding, the Associate Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, who spoke with him, were 'disposed to accept Michael's comments', which included the assessment that 'protests from outside and attempts to engage in or incite illegal activities inside can only have unfortunate consequences'.<sup>177</sup> These efforts by the AUCECB at undermining the cause of the dissident Baptists did not put an end to the WCC's voicing concern, but it did likely blunt its advocacy on their behalf. A lack of direct connections to dissident Baptists reinforced the WCC's proximity to the AUCECB's viewpoint. John Arnold, of the British Council of Churches, would later recall that in 1969, the WCC sent a 'small team', including himself, to the USSR in order to make contact with the *Initsiativniki*, but this effort failed, implying that such direct connections did not exist at the time.<sup>178</sup>

In 1970, Blake wrote Ivanov again, to inquire, *inter alia*, about a petition by '1,453 Christian mothers', which had been addressed to Brezhnev in March. Like the previous appeals, the petition combined criticism of the constitution with appeal to human rights texts, referencing many articles of the Universal Declaration. Copies of the petition had also been sent to numerous other Soviet 'officials, organizations and journals', including the AUCECB and the Council of Relatives of Baptist Prisoners.<sup>179</sup> The WCC had obtained a copy, as had other sources in the West, and Blake's letter noted that the WCC had received 'many questions concerning this letter and, as we should like to answer them in the appropriate way, we should be grateful if you would let us have your interpretation of the facts'.<sup>180</sup> Unlike the previous occasion, in 1967, however, there is no record of the CCIA interceding with the CRA, meaning that the matter was kept confined to dialogue between the WCC and its member church, the AUCECB. No reply from the latter is present, either.

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<sup>176</sup> Ivanov and Karev, 'Open Letter of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the USSR', December 1967, WCCA GS 42.4.075/1.

<sup>177</sup> Payne to Blake, 28 January 1968, 2, WCCA GS 42.4.075/1.

<sup>178</sup> John Arnold, 'Cold War, Dissidence and the Ecumenical Movement', in Filo, ed., *Christian World Community*, 152-170, on 161.

<sup>179</sup> Evangelical Christian and Baptist mothers living in the USSR, 'To the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, L.I. Brezhnev', March 1969, 1, WCCA GS 42.4.075/1.

<sup>180</sup> Blake to Ivanov, 21 January 1970, WCCA GS 42.4.075/1.

The WCC's activity on behalf of reform Baptists contrasted with that of Amnesty International, then on the cusp of gaining widespread authority. In 1969, Amnesty campaigned on behalf of Grigori Ivanovich Zemlyanko, a Russian reform Baptist who had been sentenced to four years in a labor camp. Amnesty's group in Westminster wrote to the WCC, by way of the British Council of Churches, to request a statement in support of Zemlyanko. It noted that the Baptist World Alliance was undertaking representations about the plight of Baptists in general and with specific attention to the case of Zemlyanko.<sup>181</sup> Hugh Wilcox, the secretary of the British Council of Churches' Department of International Affairs, who forwarded Amnesty's letter, wrote that he was 'of course extremely sympathetic to Amnesty', but 'it seems to me it would be difficult for either the World or British Council of Churches to take up a position on individual cases'; he asked if there was 'a CCIA line on this'.<sup>182</sup>

The CCIA's Alan Booth replied, suggesting Wilcox obtain the opinions of Payne and Sir John Lawrence, a former diplomat to the USSR. The divergence between the views of these two illustrated the two roads the WCC could take. Payne's opinion should be given the most weight, Booth wrote, since – after serving, until 1967, as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain – Payne had been appointed as one of the six presidents of the WCC in 1968. According to Booth, Payne generally took 'the view that one should be cautious in public intervention on behalf of the Baptists in Russia, who have an extreme wing which is in itself unreasonable in its demands'. Lawrence's view, on the other hand, would be that 'Dr. Payne is too much of an ecclesiastical bureaucrat and too ready to listen to the Baptist "establishment" in Russia'. (Lawrence would go on to become chairman of Keston College in 1969, an organization discussed further below.) Booth's own feeling was that 'I doubt the value of a purely demonstrative "message" from the W.C.C. or the B.C.C. while at the same time I don't like to slap down Amnesty International'. Thus, '[s]ubject to Payne's approval', Booth proposed the British Council of Churches inform Amnesty that it and the WCC were 'fully aware of the situation, and are trying to handle it within our own community and in the best way we know, and that we wish Amnesty International well in their concern for such cases'.<sup>183</sup> The archival file does not contain any action subsequently taken. The exchange shows how the WCC's brand of 'quiet diplomacy', primarily at the ecclesiastical level, with great weight given to the views of its member

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<sup>181</sup> Mary V. Kernick to WCC, 20 August 1969, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1965-/U.S.S.R. 1964-9.

<sup>182</sup> Hugh Wilcox to Booth, 26 August 1969, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/USSR 1965-/U.S.S.R. 1964-9.

<sup>183</sup> Booth to Wilcox, 'Amnesty International and the Russian Baptist', 4 September 1969.

churches as opposed to individuals or dissident groups, was at odds with the approach of Amnesty, which sought to publicly address persecution, with an exclusive focus on individual cases.

## Dissidents, dialogue, and détente

Over the course of 1966-1970, the WCC and CCIA went through a major shift in leadership, in which many of the Western men who had been with the organization from its early days – even from its beginning – were replaced by a more ethnically, geographically, and denominationally diverse group of leaders (diversity in terms of gender was slower in coming). This reflected a sea change in the organization's constituency, largely as a result of decolonization, in a similar way as the UN's membership had changed. As in the UN, this brought changes in political outlook, including what has been described as a more 'politicized' approach, and a desire to draw attention to not only tensions between East and West, but between the global North and South (more commonly at the time referred to as the Third World).<sup>184</sup> The high tide of détente in the early 1970s suggested that the moment for such a reorientation had come, as did the rise of the Non-Aligned Movement and demands for a New International Economic Order. Amid such tectonic shifts in international relations, what became of the WCC's concern for religious liberty in the USSR?

By the early 1970s, religious and political dissidence in the USSR increasingly overlapped. A good illustration of this was the statement issued by the dissident Yevgeni Barabanov on 15 September 1973, addressing the press in Solzhenitsyn's apartment. His own flat had been searched by the KGB, during which many of his human rights-related materials had been confiscated, and after which he had been interrogated. Barabanov admitted to having sent many such texts to the West but defended his right to do so. He referenced the Universal Declaration and explained that 'I was guided not only by my rights of free spiritual orientation, but also by the demands of Christian duty and conscience, for I am convinced that genuine spiritual values cannot be created in a closed atmosphere where there is disinformation'. Barabanov's appeal was transmitted to the West, where it galvanized a campaign for his case.<sup>185</sup> Ellis also writes that by 1974, it was becoming clear that the Moscow Patriarchate 'was not going to change, and exhortations addressed to it dwindled with the passing years'.<sup>186</sup> This did not mean the end of Christian activism, quite the contrary: efforts to appeal to the West seem only to have

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<sup>184</sup> Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, "Der Christ fürchtet den Umbruch nicht". Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Spannungsfeld von Dekolonisierung, Entwestlichung und Politisierung', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 21-74.

<sup>185</sup> Quoted in Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 317.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

intensified, which likely meant a closer connection to human rights language. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) provided a major impulse in this regard. The most important religious dissident group, the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR, founded by 'three Russian Orthodox Christians' at the end of 1976, would by the mid-1980s succeed in sending over 1,300 pages of *samizdat* documents to the West.<sup>187</sup>

The perception of collaboration with the state by church hierarchies united secular and religious dissidents against figures such as Nikodim. A telling example is provided by the scientist Valery Chalidze, whose 1973 overview of the dissident movement included a brief section on religion, in the section on 'minorities'. Chalidze showed empathy for the 'tyranny' the Russian Orthodox Church faced, which meant it struggled simply 'to exist'. He wrote that he understood that 'it is natural that church officials sometimes render unto Caesar excessively', although 'my own ethic is different'. But Chalidze then went on to criticize 'the instances of church hierarchs' making common cause with Caesar in persecuting or deceiving believers', as he accused Nikodim of having done in the case of Boris Talantov (a mathematics teacher and friend of Levitin, who in 1969 had been sentenced to two years in a labor camp for his advocacy of religious freedom, where he had died).<sup>188</sup> Thus, Nikodim figured as an enemy of the dissident movement rather than an ally in fraught circumstances, as the WCC was inclined to see him.

As more and more information became available on religious repression and human rights, and grassroots human rights activism became a major current in Western social movements, the WCC came under pressure to act publicly, too. Small research institutes such as Keston College, based in Oxford, England (established in 1969), Glaube in der 2. Welt, based near Zürich, Switzerland (founded in 1972), and the Inter-Academical Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, in Utrecht, the Netherlands (established in 1970), provided information that implied action to help Eastern European and Soviet religious and other dissidents was imperative. Mark Hurst has written a history of Michael Bourdeaux and his organization, Keston College, in which he emphasizes the importance of the group's academic credentials while calling attention to its 'activist' nature.<sup>189</sup> In its expertise-based activism, it was in many ways similar to Amnesty International, which Bourdeaux developed good relations with. A major difference, however, was that Keston College focused exclusively on the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>188</sup> Valery Chalidze, *To Defend these Rights: Human Rights in the Soviet Union*, trans. Guy Daniels (London: Collins and Harvell Press, 1975; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1974) 158-164, on 160-161.

<sup>189</sup> Mark Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations and Soviet Dissent, 1965-1985* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016) 115-146, quote on 144.

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It was less independent from international politics, as illustrated vividly by Margaret Thatcher's embrace of the organization in 1984.<sup>190</sup> Bourdeaux would clash publicly with the WCC in the same year, after which relations with Keston College were 'acrimonious', according to Hurst.<sup>191</sup>

A good illustration of the fault lines between such organizations and the WCC was an incident relating to Solzhenitsyn's 1974 expulsion. The New York-based Research Center for Religion & Human Rights in Closed Societies, which now published *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas* (previously run out of the NCCCUSA's International Department), responded to the expulsion in a 28 March 1974 'Resolution on Human Rights'. Its directors wrote that they 'concur in the need for détente in international relations, but see it as impossible when Soviet and other totalitarian governments refuse to honor the basic human rights of their own citizens.' The statement went so far as to warn of 'such disasters as followed Munich', and asserted that 'we in the Free World must intensify our struggle to support freedom and justice, everywhere, for all individuals and nations; and we steadfastly refuse to condone any selectivity or discrimination of a religious, racial, national or political character'.<sup>192</sup> The Center's Executive Director, Rev. Blahoslav S. Hrubý, made a statement suggesting that Solzhenitsyn be permitted to attend the WCC's St. Pölten consultation on human rights and its Nairobi Assembly.<sup>193</sup> In response, a member of the WCC Executive Committee, David E. Johnson, wrote a letter, passed to the press, in which he called Hrubý's proposal "irresponsible", because it would focus undue and sensationalized attention on Solzhenitsyn.<sup>194</sup> The leaders of the Center took umbrage at this, writing to the WCC that 'vigorous and constant action to help secure basic human rights for persecuted groups' was 'in accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' as well as 'with the teachings of Jesus, who told us that every man is brother to every other man'.<sup>195</sup> These statements from the Center showed a form of activist witness that was alien to the WCC's approach in its willingness to issue full-throated denunciations. To the WCC, the Center's approach likely smacked of self-righteousness, which was opposite to the ecumenical movement's

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 138-141.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>192</sup> Research Center for Religion & Human Rights in Closed Societies, 'Resolution on Human Rights', 28 March 1974, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

<sup>193</sup> Starr West Jones, James H. Sheldon, and Rev. John H. Ryder, S.J., 'Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn', 28 March 1974, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

<sup>194</sup> 'On Solzhenitsyn Invitation', *Religious News Service*, 3 April 1974, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.4.

<sup>195</sup> Starr West Jones, James H. Sheldon, and Rev. John H. Ryder, S.J., 'Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn', 28 March 1974, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

spirit of self-criticism and dialogue. The CCIA's new Director, the Argentinian-Estonian lawyer and exile Leopoldo J. Niilus, filed it in a special folder marked 'selective indignation'.<sup>196</sup>

Controversy over the WCC's position on human rights became most acute when the Orthodox layman Lev Regelson and the priest Yakunin sent a letter to the WCC's General Secretary, Philip Potter, in 1975, on the eve of the Nairobi Assembly. While Potter did not allow the letter into the Assembly's formal proceedings, long excerpts were published in the conference periodical *Target*, on 25 November 1975. The authors criticized the WCC's lack of public protest in the face of religious persecution in the Eastern bloc, with the exception of its recent appeal on behalf of Georgi Vins. (Because Vins was the general secretary of the CCECB, in January 1975, the WCC had sent a letter to the Soviet prosecutor during his trial.) The Regelson-Yakunin letter called for the WCC to make religious liberty 'the central theme of Christian ecumenism', and in fact proposed that 'the doubts about the spiritual quality of the ecumenical movement may be banished only if confession of the Cross in the original sense of the Gospel – as trials and tribulations for the sake of Christ's Name – become the basis for Christian unity'.<sup>197</sup> With this call in the background, the Assembly's discussion on the Helsinki Final Act, which had been adopted a few months prior, became highly charged.

As Katharina Kunter has written, during the Assembly the WCC was basically 'unable to come to a clear position or critical reflection on its own attitude towards the question of religious freedom in the socialist states'.<sup>198</sup> Differences of opinion as to whether to take a more outspoken course of action prevailed, and the Assembly's resolution on the Helsinki Final Act contained only toned-down phrases on religious freedom in the USSR. An open hearing on the evening of 8 December 1975, at which the precarious position of the Russian churches had been discussed in relative openness, had contributed to this outcome, by persuading critics such as the General Secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church, Albert van den Heuvel, of the need for 'consultation' and 'fraternal debate'.<sup>199</sup> According to Kunter, after Nairobi, religious freedom in relation to the Helsinki Final Act was essentially 'delegated' to the CCIA and subsequently the CEC.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> 'On Solzhenitsyn Invitation', *Religious News Service*, 3 April 1974, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.4.

<sup>197</sup> 'Two Russians appeal for WCC action on behalf of Persecuted Christians', *Target*, 25 November 1975, 4-5, WCCA GS 42.3.125/3.

<sup>198</sup> Translation mine. Katharina Kunter, *Die Kirchen im KSZE-Prozess 1968-1978* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000) 151.

<sup>199</sup> David M. Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975* (London and Grand Rapids: SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans) 169-174, quotes on 170.

<sup>200</sup> Translation mine. Kunter, *Die Kirchen*, 151.

Yakunin and Regelson followed up their letter to the Nairobi Assembly on 6 March 1976, by writing again to Potter. Unlike the first letter (as far as *Target's* excerpts showed), this time the pair drew heavily on the language of human rights, presumably in response to Nairobi's attention to the subject and especially its commitment to an international church program to take up the Helsinki Final Act. Yakunin and Regelson called for support of religious dissidents and denounced official Soviet attempts at explaining away the problem of religious freedom in the USSR.<sup>201</sup> The WCC's leadership had a different policy in mind than the confrontational one proposed by Regelson and Yakunin, however. Kunter has written that the WCC – or at least a preponderance of its leaders – remained convinced that public denunciations would, generally speaking, do more harm than good and thus restricted itself by and large to 'silent diplomacy'.<sup>202</sup> The WCC was criticized for this, but the CCIA defended its position. In notes prepared for a speech by Potter in Philadelphia, Epps wrote that without denying the problem, 'we must say that infrequently do those in the West who would like to help take the trouble to find out what it is, in fact, which does help'.<sup>203</sup>

At the same time, such defensive responses signaled that the CCIA's leadership was preoccupied with other issues, to which it considered the insistence on religious freedom in the East a distraction as well as a sign of a blinkered and self-righteous approach to the WCC's role in international affairs. As detailed in chapters 5 and 6, during these years, Epps, Niius and their colleagues pursued a rethinking of the WCC's human rights policy that broadened its scope beyond religious liberty to concerns of social justice. The Marxist inflection of the liberation theology that underlay this development should not be confused for support for Soviet-style state socialism. The stagnation of Soviet communism was itself a target of the New Left, which the CCIA's leaders had more in common with than the traditional left.<sup>204</sup> But the anti-imperial impetus behind much of the WCC's activism at this time meant that the organization was highly outspoken in criticizing the West, sympathetic to dialogue between Christianity and socialism, and – in part due to the growing representation of Eastern churchmen – decreasingly critical of communism.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, as part of this reorientation, churches were encouraged to focus on human rights violations in their own

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<sup>201</sup> 'Lev Regelson and Gleb Yakunin write to Dr. Philip Potter', in J.A. Hebl, Michael Bourdeaux, and Eugen Voss, eds., *Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union: WCC and USSR: A Post-Nairobi Documentation* (West Wickham: Keston College, 1976) 40-53, quote on 41.

<sup>202</sup> Kunter, *Die Kirchen*, 234.

<sup>203</sup> Epps to Potter, 15 April 1976, 3, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.4.

<sup>204</sup> For a critical discussion of the distinction as applicable in Latin America in particular, see Jeffrey L. Gould, 'Solidarity under Siege. The Latin American Left, 1968', *American Historical Review*, 114, 2 (2009) 348-375.

<sup>205</sup> Kunter and Schilling, "Der Christ", 62-63.



countries. The CCIA could not provide a satisfying answer, however, as to how to deal with cases in which churches were precluded from raising such questions in the first place, other than to say that protests and denunciations should be undertaken ‘with sensitivity where people are liable to suffer as a result’.<sup>206</sup> The trust it continued to place in church hierarchs like Nikodim meant that such protests were unlikely to take place.

In 1980, Epps explained the WCC’s work on human rights in relation to Eastern Europe to an American ecumenist. In Epps’ view, denunciations of communism as inherently inimical to human rights had only contributed to the hostility of Eastern European states to their countries’ churches, whereas the WCC’s new policy had contributed to a climate in which state-church relations had improved – he gave the examples of Hungary, Poland, the GDR, and the USSR – and international connections had been strengthened.<sup>207</sup> In the same year, his colleague Erich Weingärtner wrote to a Dutch ecumenist that the CSCE was ‘endangered in part by the fact that the human rights issue is frequently employed as a political weapon rather than sought after as a common goal to be achieved.’ As Weingärtner wrote, ‘it is our conviction that the most urgent task facing us is the overall reduction in tensions, which is the *only* method that has been proven to be effective in the improvement of the human rights situation in Eastern *and* Western Europe and in the broadening of possibilities of life and work of our member churches in these countries.’<sup>208</sup> The CCIA thus displayed faith in détente and dialogue over confrontation by dissidents.

Though an evaluation of the merits of these claims goes beyond the scope of this paper, it would seem that Epps’ and Weingärtner’s assessments did not recognize the crackdown on religious (and other) dissent in the USSR from 1976 to 1982, which peaked around the very time they wrote. Ellis’ assessment was that at the end of this period, ‘more than a decade of public dissent had resulted in no change whatever in the situation of the church’.<sup>209</sup> The – largely unanticipated – demise of communism at the turn of the decade, on the other hand, has led historians to emphasize the importance of those actors which voiced public criticism of human rights in Eastern Europe and the USSR.<sup>210</sup> As Kunter has written, the churches could not be considered to have been great supporters of the dissidents who responded to the CSCE by demanding their governments respect human

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<sup>206</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva, October 1975) 7.

<sup>207</sup> Epps to Rev. Grover Hartman, 25 November 1980, 3-4, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.4.

<sup>208</sup> Weingärtner to H.A.M. Fiolet, WCCA CCIA 428.16.4.50.

<sup>209</sup> Quoted in Lupinin, ‘The Russian Orthodox Church’, on 30.

<sup>210</sup> E.g. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*.

rights.<sup>211</sup> At the same time, historians such as Benjamin Nathans have cautioned against assuming too readily that a ‘Helsinki effect’ brought down communism and ended the Cold War.<sup>212</sup>

## Conclusions

Contrary to the anticommunist approach of actors like the Vatican or the American government, the ecumenical movement sought to establish dialogue with both churches and the authorities in the USSR. While, from 1948 to 1950, the WCC elaborated a conception of religious liberty that was embedded in the framework of postwar human rights, it toned down its critique of communism as it sought to avoid taking sides in the Cold War and pursued membership for the Russian Orthodox Church. Though human rights language featured as part of the preparatory discussions, the Universal Declaration was used not so much as a rhetorical cudgel as an impartial, technical standard by which to evaluate domestic legislation. The desire to widen the ecumenical fellowship was given overriding priority, which dovetailed with fears of harming Russian churches by issuing criticism, rather than helping them. It should be noted that the WCC was by no means alone in taking a cautious stance at this time. According to David Foglesong, ‘From the late 1950s through the early 1970s, many Protestant leaders in North America felt that it was better to keep silent about the persecution of believers in the USSR.’<sup>213</sup> And according to Preston, even religious liberty promotion as part of American foreign policy was at a low ebb from 1963 (a year marked by the outbreak of Buddhist protests in Vietnam, which placed the Kennedy administration in an awkward position, and by the onset of a thaw in Soviet-American relations) until the mid-1970s, when actors outside the Nixon administration, such as Senator Henry Jackson, precipitated a return of religious liberty to foreign policy.<sup>214</sup>

As Christian protests against the leadership of the Russian Orthodox and Baptist churches gained in force, converging with the dissident movement’s embrace of human rights from the second half of the 1960s, the WCC’s commitment to ecclesiastical relations meant it was increasingly out of step with the times. It responded to a number of public appeals, chiefly through its ecclesiastical

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<sup>211</sup> Kunter, *Die Kirchen*, 231.

<sup>212</sup> Nathans dismisses such claims as ‘overwrought’. Nathans, ‘Soviet Dissidents’, 38.

<sup>213</sup> David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the ‘Evil Empire’: The Crusade for a ‘Free Russia’ since 1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 150.

<sup>214</sup> Andrew Preston, ‘The Spirit of Democracy: Religious Liberty and American Anti-Communism during the Cold War’, in Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, eds., *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 141-163, on 158.

channels, and in doing so supported the cause of dissidents, amplifying their critiques of Soviet legislation and their references to human rights. But the WCC refused to join in the recasting of human rights as a language of public witness. In this sense, the WCC stood in opposition to the 1970s 'breakthrough' of human rights as a language of grassroots public protest.<sup>215</sup> The contrast with new organizations such as Keston College, which harnessed the publication of reliable information for the purposes of an activist agenda, made the WCC seem reticent or aloof at best, and complicit at worst. These problems were compounded by the organization's widening of its human rights engagement, beyond religious liberty, to issues of social justice, which seemed to critical observers to align with socialist foreign policy objectives. As the success of Amnesty International during these years demonstrated, transcending the Cold War could be a highly popular cause. But Amnesty was ideologically committed to a minimalist form of liberalism, in its focus on individual civil and political rights, whereas the WCC came to see this approach as narrow and thus sought to transcend liberalism, too. While this new approach could convincingly be justified as a response to questions of social justice, especially in the Third World, the WCC's concomitant reticence to support Soviet dissidents damaged its credibility as a truly global voice for human rights.

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<sup>215</sup> Benjamin Nathans, 'Soviet Dissidents, Human Rights, and the New Global Morality', in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2014) 33-48; Moyn, *Last Utopia*, ch. 4.

## 2. Self-determination, religious freedom, and Islam: ecumenical human rights engagement and decolonization in Indonesia and Nigeria

‘In all predominantly Moslem States religious minorities today live in fear and trembling of what the future independence of their countries may mean for them.’<sup>216</sup> – Memorandum prepared by ‘various missionary and religious authorities in the Middle East’, 1942

‘The most effective defence of human rights and thus of religious freedom is to be found in the mind and will of the people as reflected in constitution, law courts, and practice. It follows that action to promote the observance of human rights, if it is to be meaningful, must be domestic.’<sup>217</sup> – O. Frederick Nolde, 1961

### Introduction

Because the World Council of Churches (WCC) included from the start non-Western churches, albeit a small minority, and because of its close linkage to the missionary movement, the politics of the ecumenical movement were closely tied to questions of empire and decolonization. In the mid-twentieth century process of decolonization, both empire and struggles for self-determination could be justified with reference to human rights.<sup>218</sup> Historical debate continues on the significance of both to the wider history of human rights in the twentieth century, with reference to the question of whether and when a ‘breakthrough’ of human rights occurred.<sup>219</sup> One of the less-explored strands in this field

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<sup>216</sup> ‘Recommendations on Steps Considered Necessary to Secure Freedom in the Independent States in the Middle East’, n.d. [1942], 1, WCCA International Missionary Council (IMC) 26.16.08.

<sup>217</sup> Offprint of O. Frederick Nolde, ‘Religious Liberty Considered as an International Problem’, *The Ecumenical Review*, 13, 4 (1961) 5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>218</sup> Fabian Klose, ‘Human Rights for and against Empire – Legal and Public Discourses in the Age of Decolonisation’, *Journal of the History of International Law*, 18 (2016) 317–338.

<sup>219</sup> See *inter alia* Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) ch. 3; Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Jan Eckel, ‘Human Rights and Decolonization: New Perspectives and Open Questions’, 10 June 2014, <http://humanityjournal.org/issue-1/human-rights-and-decolonization-new-perspectives-and-open-questions/> (accessed 15 June 2018); Steven L.B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Meredith Terretta,

remains the history of postcolonial constitution-making.<sup>220</sup> On this subject, Samuel Moyn has remarked that ‘the main forces at work in the slow shift toward explicit declarations in new constitutions were concerns about ethnic powersharing and settler property rights’.<sup>221</sup> While recognizing the importance of these factors, this chapter focuses on another major reason such provisions came about: concern for religious liberty. Existing accounts of the insertion of bills of rights, modeled on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, into the constitutions of nations emerging from British empire have tended to view the subject from the perspective of the state, but non-governmental actors could exert important influences. This chapter shows how ecumenical Christians, missionaries in particular, were a major influence on postcolonial provisions for religious freedom and related rights.

Historians continue to debate the relationship between mission and empire, with views ranging from a strong emphasis on their entanglement with imperial power and their role as ‘cultural imperialists’ to accounts stressing their fundamentally faith-driven and therefore transcendent agenda as well their critical attitude to colonial rule.<sup>222</sup> Building on such scholarship, the ecumenical movement’s relationship to decolonization has received increasing attention in recent years, though much work remains to be done. Recent scholarship on American mainline Protestants has stressed their anti-imperialism.<sup>223</sup> Andrew Preston, for example, has pointed to examples of prominent American missionaries who already before World War II ‘aligned themselves with anti-colonial and national self-determination’.<sup>224</sup> The relationship between such criticism of imperialism, the religious freedom of missionaries, and the ecumenical embrace of human rights in the 1940s, is yet to be fully explored. In this respect, John Stuart has cautioned that ‘emphasis on Americans and on international ecumenism obscures important elements in mid-twentieth century human rights discourse, notably the extent to which British imperialism influenced the thoughts and actions of Protestant missionaries

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‘Anti-Colonial Lawyering, Postwar Human Rights, and Decolonization across Imperial Boundaries in Africa’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 52, 3 (2017) 448-478.

<sup>220</sup> See especially A.W. Brian Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire: Britain and the Genesis of the European Convention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004) ch. 6; Charles O. H. Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation: The Emergence of Domestic Human Rights Instruments in Britain’s Overseas Territories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>221</sup> Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 112.

<sup>222</sup> See *inter alia* David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Brian Stanley and Alaine Low, eds., *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003); John Stuart, *British Missionaries and the End of Empire: East, Central, and Southern Africa, 1939-1964* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>223</sup> See especially Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>224</sup> Andrew Preston, ‘Peripheral Visions: American Mainline Protestants and the Global Cold War’, *Cold War History*, 13, 1 (2013) 109-30, on 128.

and ecumenists'.<sup>225</sup> According to Stuart, in discussions from the interwar period on, missionaries agreed with British officials in viewing 'imperial and colonial rule rather than international declarations and conventions as the means by which indigenous peoples and religious minorities might best be protected'. Only by the late 1950s, 'faced with increasing evidence of imperial misdemeanour and resort to violence, their attitude to empire became more questioning and more critical'.<sup>226</sup> Postcolonial constitution-making blended the framework of imperial rule, with its state-centric enforcement, with international norms, the content of which it integrated.

This chapter argues that the primary way in which the language of human rights featured in the ecumenical response to anticolonialism and decolonization was with respect to religious freedom, namely that of Christian missionaries and of Christian minorities. The most important locus of such human rights engagement was in majority Muslim countries, where decolonization seemed to Christians a potential death knell. As Linde Lindkvist has pointed out, the most important ecumenical study on religious freedom at the time, the American Searle M. Bates' *Religious Liberty: An Inquiry*, identified 'Moslem countries' as one of the principal areas in which religious freedom was threatened. Its analysis 'rested on the presupposition that the impediments facing these [missionary] organizations could be traced back to Islamic scripture'.<sup>227</sup> To counter this threat, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), representing both the churches of the WCC and the missionaries of the IMC, served as the nexus in a transnational effort to protect Christians in a wide range of majority Muslim countries: the Sudan, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, (northern) Nigeria, and elsewhere.

The first section of this chapter sketches the general attitude of ecumenical churchmen towards decolonization and details the CCIA's reservations with regard to the right to self-determination. This analysis confirms that the WCC took an approach to decolonization that was critical of empire but at the same time gradualist and apprehensive of anticolonial nationalism – more in line with those of liberal imperial officials than the anticolonial actors seeking to liberate themselves from them.<sup>228</sup> Moreover, the aid that churches provided to newly independent countries was viewed in terms of charity and technical assistance. The second, much larger, section, delves into the history

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<sup>225</sup> John Stuart, 'Empire, Mission, Ecumenism, and Human Rights: "Religious Liberty" in Egypt, 1919-1956', *Church History*, 83, 1, (2014) 110-134, on 111.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>227</sup> Linde Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 74.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. John Stuart, "'Speaking for the Unvoiced?'" British Missionaries and Aspects of African Nationalism, 1949-1959', in Brian Stanley and Alaine Low, eds., *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003) 183-193, on 185.

of ecumenical religious liberty advocacy in the context of decolonization in majority Muslim countries. This section is divided into three parts: first, a general overview of the relationship between missionaries, religious freedom, and human rights; second, an account of Dutch missionary lobbying for constitutional religious liberty provisions during the Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949) and after; and third, the story of British missionaries' efforts at securing such provisions in the Nigerian constitution. Both of these case studies show the importance of ecumenical formulations of religious liberty and human rights, as well as the variety of actors involved in what was an emphatically transnational undertaking, yet one aimed primarily at securing religious freedom within newly-established states.

## The WCC, the churches, and decolonization

The WCC remained a largely Western and Western-oriented organization until the 1960s, as Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling have argued, but they note that the missionary movement embarked on a process of 'globalization' earlier on.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, contacts with the non-Western world were of course part and parcel of the missionary enterprise, and the International Missionary Council, founded in 1921 and led by the British missionary leader Joseph H. Oldham, served as an early vector for missionary ecumenism. It is important, for this reason, to keep in mind the distinction between churches in the West on one hand, and missionaries and churches in the non-Western world on the other. Still, the leading ecumenist Paul Abrecht had to acknowledge in the official history of the ecumenical movement in 1970 that it 'discovered the urgent problems of the nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East only after the process of radical decolonization was well under way'.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, this statement omitted the complicity of Western churches and missionaries in colonialism in the first place. Christianity had played a key role in legitimizing the European 'civilizing mission', and missionary activities had benefited from and supported imperial state power. While ecumenical leaders such as Joseph Oldham and Hendrik Kraemer had developed an increasingly critical attitude towards imperial rule, the WCC's member churches tended to take a more conservative

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<sup>229</sup> Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, "Der Christ fürchtet den Umbruch nicht": Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Spannungsfeld von Dekolonisierung, Entwestlichung und Politisierung', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 21-74, on 29.

<sup>230</sup> Paul Abrecht, 'The Development of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action', in Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 2: 1948-1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1970) 233-260, on 247.

stance.<sup>231</sup> Most ecumenical social thought on the needs of decolonizing nations was cast in the language of charity or that of technical assistance. It should thus be no surprise that rights language, especially in the mode of anticolonial nationalism, was peripheral to the WCC's engagement with questions of decolonization. This section discusses the CCIA's stance on these issues, particularly on the right to self-determination – soon established by anticolonial actors as the essential precondition for all other rights – and the attitude of the churches, whose position mattered greatly for their influence in imperial metropolises, whereas the role of missionaries is discussed in the next section.

The WCC's 1948 Amsterdam Assembly set itself against colonialism and called for progress towards 'self-government for subject peoples', but this fell short of endorsing 'self-determination', let alone a right thereto.<sup>232</sup> Similarly, one of the CCIA's official aims, set out in 1946, was 'to assist in "acceptance by all nations of the obligation to promote to the utmost the well-being of dependent peoples including their advance toward self-government and the development of their political institutions"'.<sup>233</sup> In a 1956 review of ecumenical statements on self-determination, CCIA officer Richard Fagley's first quotation of a reference to a (right to) 'self-determination' came from the 27-30 December 1952 Ecumenical Study Conference for East Asia, held at Lucknow, India, which used the term with respect to East Asia. The first embrace of the term by the WCC as a whole was at the 1954 Evanston Assembly, which endorsed the 'legitimate right of the self-determination of peoples', while again qualifying it by reference to the 'obligation (...) to promote the educational, economic, social, and political advancement of dependent peoples, that they may be enabled to play their full part in the international community'.<sup>234</sup> The ecumenical refusal to recognize self-determination as an absolute right distinguished it from the Third World bloc that would enshrine it in the draft UN Covenants in the early 1950s.<sup>235</sup>

In the 1950s, the WCC began to systematically study what it referred to as 'areas of rapid social change in Asia, Africa and Latin America'. Apart from self-determination, the Lucknow Study

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<sup>231</sup> For a discussion of Oldham and Kraemer, see Udi Greenberg, 'Protestants, Decolonisation, and European Integration, 1885-1961', *Journal of Modern History*, 89, 2 (2017) 314-354.

<sup>232</sup> Quoted in Edward Duff, *The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches* (London, New York, and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, 1956) 273.

<sup>233</sup> O. Frederick Nolde, 'Ecumenical Action in International Affairs', in Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 2: 1948-1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1970) 261-86, on 278-279.

<sup>234</sup> Quoted in Richard M. Fagley, 'Notes on Self-Determination', June 1956, 19-20, World Council of Churches Archives (WCCA) CCIA 428.4.6.1.

<sup>235</sup> Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).



Conference proposed ‘radical reform of land tenure systems, planned economic development (...) and new policies by western [sic] nations in support of political and economic change in Asia’.<sup>236</sup> This agenda for ‘social justice’ was not only informed by ‘concern for our brothers for whom Christ died’, but also by the ‘obligation for the colonial powers to see that national liberation is achieved in a democratic framework, without the movement falling into the hands of Communism’.<sup>237</sup> At its subsequent meeting, the Central Committee promulgated a letter to churches around the world, sketching the dimensions of the issue in wider terms:

‘The struggle for and attainment of national independence, the break-up of the old village structure of society and the attempt to build up a society based on industrial techniques, the challenge to old customs and traditions through new conceptions of fundamental rights, the transformation in the status of women and the pattern of the family, all these indicate the vast dimension of the revolution’.<sup>238</sup>

Following on from this, in 1955, the working committee of the Department on Church and Society initiated a major study entitled ‘The Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change’, which lasted until 1961. Its chairman, the Dutch agricultural economist and senior World Bank official Dr. Egbert de Vries, stated that the ‘focal point of the study will be the idea of *responsible emancipation*’. The study would have ‘four main areas of concern’: ‘(1) responsible citizenship; (2) village and rural life; (3) the problems of urbanization; (4) the impact of foreign enterprise and international assistance’.<sup>239</sup> The concept of ‘responsible emancipation’ transposed personalist thinking on the relationship between man and community, articulated at Amsterdam as the ‘responsible society’, to what at this time was becoming known as the ‘Third World’. ‘Responsible emancipation’ demanded ‘a concern for the freedom and dignity of the human personality and for the development of societies where man can find cultural and religious fulfilment’. ‘Responsible citizenship’, specifically, was concerned with the emergence of newly independent, democratic states. Such concepts played a central role in ecumenical thinking on how to ensure that ‘emancipation’ could be steered away from ‘destructive’ paths and towards ‘creative’ ones.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Abrecht, ‘Ecumenical Social Thought’, 248; quoted in Richard M. Fagley, ‘Notes on Self-Determination’, June 1956, 19-20, WCCA CCIA 428.4.6.1.

<sup>237</sup> Quoted in Abrecht, ‘Ecumenical Social Thought’, 248.

<sup>238</sup> Quoted in WCC, Minutes and Records of the Central Committee (MRCC) 1955 (Geneva: WCC, 1955) 104.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 105.

Within the WCC, there were voices which espoused relatively strong support for anticolonialism. At the Evanston Assembly, Charles Malik, in his final year as the Lebanese Ambassador to the UN and the US, forcefully spoke on the subject:

‘Asia and Africa are rising. They desire the full enjoyment of their natural rights. (...) The great stirring for social justice, for the elimination of discrimination and misery, for the liberation of the eternally depressed and dispossessed, for conferring some dignity upon millions of human beings who are only human by name, all this certainly reflects the will of Christ.’<sup>241</sup>

Yet a more technocratic and paternalistic approach predominated, as illustrated by a report on ‘rapid social development’ by Robert C. Mackie, head of the Division of Inter-Church Aid. Mackie quoted approvingly and at length from Charles Malik’s address to the Evanston Assembly, yet his response to Malik’s call revolved around providing emergency relief and economic aid to churches in Africa and Asia, so as to meet ‘human need’ – materially and spiritually. Political questions hardly figured – Mackie assiduously avoided any direct mention of colonialism and decolonization – except to note that minority Christian communities were often ‘standing by themselves in non-Christian, and not infrequently anti-Christian, environments’. As Mackie noted, ‘[t]he old political safeguards from colonial days, whatever be their value, have practically gone.’ He wrote that what he believed ‘Charles Malik meant us to see’ was that the churches stood before an opportunity ‘of rebuilding good relationships between the West on the one hand and Asia and Africa on the other’, much as a century earlier, David Livingstone had stood before such an opportunity and boldly grasped it. Thus, Mackie exulted, in his introduction: ‘How great was the moral power of this single-minded man [Livingstone] who opened up Africa for the outside world!’ Though Mackie acknowledged, euphemistically, that the ‘influence of wealth and political power’ had led to a ‘crisis in relationships to-day between Africa and the western [sic] world’, he seemed to believe that this problem could be consigned to the past if the churches developed ‘a new form of response’.<sup>242</sup>

The CCIA’s approach to decolonization reflected similar assumptions. As Nolde had to admit in retrospect, the CCIA moved slowly on decolonization. Because of disagreement among the WCC’s constituency on ‘the proper tempo and scope of the decolonization process’, Nolde wrote, the CCIA took ‘a rather cautious, quite possibly an over-cautious approach to most of the colonial issues’.

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<sup>241</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 79. It should be noted that Malik’s conception of natural rights subordinated human rights to religion: ‘What a pale and miserable phantom is all our activity for human rights by comparison with the humanity already achieved for all of us in Jesus Christ!’ Charles Malik, ‘The Spiritual Implication of the Human Rights Covenant’, in Kenneth G. Grubb and O. Frederick Nolde, *Christian Responsibility in World Affairs: A Symposium under the Auspices of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs* (New York: CCIA, 1949) 7-10, on 10.

<sup>242</sup> MRCC 1955, 79-81.

According to him, the CCIA attempted to preserve the ‘essentially non-political’ character of the work of churches and missions.<sup>243</sup> This led it to adopt an approach aimed at avoiding confrontation or polarization, as was clear from the CCIA’s reporting in the 1950s, which defended its insistence on obtaining the ‘voluntary’ cooperation of colonial powers rather than risk ‘alienating’ them:

‘the officers [of the CCIA] have deemed it advisable to exercise caution in regard to formal representations on substantive issues. One factor has been the increasing interjection of political issues, particularly in the Fourth Committee of the U.N. General Assembly [the Special Political and Decolonization Committee], in a manner which tends to alienate the governments administering dependent territories rather than to enlist their co-operation. (...) The C.C.I.A. has continued to follow the work of the U.N. agencies in this field, having in mind the objective of a voluntary rather than a coerced acceptance by all nations of their responsibilities for the well-being of dependent peoples.’<sup>244</sup>

The CCIA argued that its own ability to act was limited, given how sensitive states were to international interventions in these matters. It therefore emphasized the importance of action by churches with respect to their national governments: ‘Expressions of worldwide Christian interest in these matters can serve as a highly important stimulus and corrective to one-sided points of view. But the main front for action is at the national level.’<sup>245</sup>

In line with its depoliticized approach, the CCIA rejected the ‘tendency to make an absolute of self-determination apart from the other considerations which must figure in the responsible society’. Self-determination, as a collective right, was not cast as a human right, and could therefore easily be subjected to qualifications and caveats. This approach was in line with that of the colonial governments.<sup>246</sup> One reason for this was the fear that, as the British CCIA commissioner S.A. Morrison put it in a discussion on Palestine in 1948, ‘[i]f every ethnic group of responsible size decided it wanted an independent state, the situation would be uncontrollable’.<sup>247</sup> At a 1956 discussion of the CCIA Executive Committee, which intended to clarify the concept of self-determination, the participants distinguished between self-determination as a ‘principle’ and as a ‘concrete right’ that came into being under ‘certain conditions’, but failed to enunciate these to a significant degree.<sup>248</sup> When the UN’s draft human rights covenant incorporated self-determination as its first substantive article from

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<sup>243</sup> Nolde, ‘Ecumenical Action’, 278-279.

<sup>244</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1952-1953* (London and New York, 1953) 35.

<sup>245</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1957-1958* (London and New York, 1958) 38.

<sup>246</sup> Steven L.B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 43-46.

<sup>247</sup> CCIA, ‘Minutes of the first meeting of the Commission, Woudschoten, Netherlands, 17 – 18 August 1948’, 21, WCCA CCIA 428.4.2.

<sup>248</sup> Nolde, ‘Ecumenical Action’, 278-279.

1955 on, the CCIA grudgingly began to include it in enumerations of human rights, but its policy did not meaningfully change.<sup>249</sup>

The CCIA and the churches it represented legitimated at least the temporary continuation of colonial rule by reference to nebulous criteria of the ‘fitness’ or ‘preparedness’ of the colonized for even limited forms of self-government. The CCIA’s reports make clear that such considerations played a decisive role in whether to apply self-determination as a right or as a principle. These criteria were explained using a number of factors. When the process of decolonization accelerated towards the end of the 1950s, the CCIA welcomed this but indicated its ‘concern over the need for progress in regard to the foundation of free and durable political institutions’.<sup>250</sup> In 1960 the UN General Assembly adopted its ‘Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples’, which emphatically drew on human rights and self-determination, and criticized considerations of “‘preparedness’” as merely “‘a pretext for delaying independence’”. This did not dissuade the CCIA from continuing to articulate concerns about ‘weaknesses in the preparation – economic, social, educational, political – for the exercise of self-determination’. In view of the many newly independent states facing such challenges, the CCIA stressed the need for a sharp increase in development aid: ‘It is clear that “decolonisation” is not more than a partial answer to the full well-being of peoples emerging from the dependent relationship.’<sup>251</sup> Concerns for ‘preparedness’ were also put forward at the New Delhi Assembly’s Commission on CCIA, which did condemn ‘self-serving delay’ but pointed out that ‘problems exist where a people has not been sufficiently prepared to assume the responsibilities of political independence’.<sup>252</sup> Such considerations made self-determination conditional on external and hazy criteria, thus blocking any immediate rights claims. In an exceptional move, in 1954, the CCIA recognized ‘the right and fitness of the people of Cyprus to determine for themselves their future status’. Yet this exception did little more than to confirm the rule, and the fact that the Cypriot population was white, unlike most colonized populations, is suggestive of the importance of race in shaping the CCIA’s position.<sup>253</sup>

Another major concern on the part of the CCIA was the implications that self-determination could have for the fragmentation of international society. In response to the 1960 UN Declaration cited above, which stated that ‘all peoples have the right to self-determination’, Fagley noted that

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<sup>249</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1955-1956* (London and New York, 1956) 48.

<sup>250</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1958-1959* (London and New York, 1956) 43.

<sup>251</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1961-1962* (London and New York, 1962) 46-47.

<sup>252</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 48.

<sup>253</sup> Nolde, ‘Ecumenical Action’, 279.

‘neither “peoples” nor “self-determination” is very precise’ and could mean many different things. He referred back to the 1956 CCIA Executive Committee paper and repeated its quotation from E.H. Carr’s 1942 *Conditions of Peace*: ‘the urgent need now is to “alter, not the location, but the meaning of frontiers”’.<sup>254</sup> In a memorandum on the trusteeship system, the South African CCIA commissioner Maurice Webb asked whether its pursuit of independence for trustee territories was really worth it – ‘But is national independence an absolute good? Is it an end in itself? Or is the important thing the use that is made of it?’. He mused, ‘is the United Nations to end in nothing more than a greater fragmentation of the world?’<sup>255</sup>

Meredith Terretta has stressed the importance of the UN trusteeship system to the postwar history of human rights, because trusteeship territories became were ‘sites where various internationalisms, including postwar human rights principles, converged’, and which ‘brought the contradictions between colonial powers’ discursive utterances of “civilizing mission” and the reality of their repressive style of governance into stark relief’.<sup>256</sup> The system, which was established to oversee the decolonization of former League of Nations mandates that had formerly been administered by Axis powers, represented a small but significant portion of all colonized peoples. During its early years, the CCIA expressed support for the trusteeship system, and in 1949, it supported the reference of South West Africa’s legal status to the International Court of Justice, which the South African government sought to prevent.<sup>257</sup> The CCIA’s 1950 study on religious liberty displayed confidence in the trusteeship system, asserting that ‘petitions submitted from non-self-governing territories under the Trusteeship System receive careful consideration’.<sup>258</sup> Early CCIA reports included words of appreciation for the Trusteeship Council’s

‘insistence upon human rights and fundamental freedoms in these [non-self-governing] territories. (...) The fact that the Trusteeship Council seeks the improvement of conditions among people who are the concern of the missionary enterprise seems to demand for this area of international action far more attention than it has hitherto been accorded’.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> CCIA, Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Committee at Paris, France, 1-4 August 1962, 11, WCCA CCIA 428.4.8.

<sup>255</sup> Maurice Webb, ‘The United Nations Trusteeship System’, February 1956, 8-9, WCCA CCIA 428.13.4.1.6.

<sup>256</sup> Meredith Terretta, ‘From Below and to the Left?: Human Rights and Liberation Politics in Africa’s Postcolonial Age’, *Journal of World History*, 24, 2 (2013) 389-416, 395-396.

<sup>257</sup> Nolde, ‘Ecumenical Action’, 279.

<sup>258</sup> CCIA, ‘Religious Freedom in Face of Dominant Forces: Part I: “The Defense of Religious Liberty”’, July 1950, 16, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.1.4.16.

<sup>259</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1949-1950* (London and New York, 1950) 26.

After a few years, however, this endorsement of the trusteeship system disappeared from the annual report. A possible explanation for this would be that the trusteeship system proved a disappointment, as colonial states effectively barred the application of human rights to colonial territories and maintained repressive policies.<sup>260</sup>

The question of the ecumenical movement's response to colonial violence is one that goes beyond the scope of the present work, but it is clear that denunciations of such violence in terms of human rights were at most a minor part of the CCIA's activities.<sup>261</sup> Responding to the repressive policies of colonial governments towards anticolonial resistance, such as in Algeria or in Kenya, was left primarily to the churches of the imperial power in question. Such churches adhered to a range of opinions, and though the ecumenical movement represented churches that were more critical of empire than others, their criticism tended to be relatively muted.<sup>262</sup> Given the emphasis on the national level as the proper one for dealing with decolonization, the CCIA was unlikely to go over the heads of its national constituents. For example, in the case of the Algerian War, a conflict which 'prompted the first mass petitions to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva', the WCC focused on the importance of dialogue as central to decolonization, while the CCIA called for 'a just, peaceful and democratic settlement', stopping well short of calling for self-determination.<sup>263</sup> And while the CCIA was heavily involved in the case of Cyprus, working hard to salvage negotiations for independence as British forces met Cypriot insurgency with escalating violence, its reports did not reference Greece's 1956-1957 complaints to the European Court of Human Rights and its assertion of human rights violations and even crimes against humanity at the UN.<sup>264</sup> When violence erupted in Cyprus in the years following its independence in 1960, on the other hand, the WCC Central Committee 'called

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<sup>260</sup> Meredith Terretta, "'We Had Been Fooled into Thinking that the UN Watches over the Entire World': Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonization', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 34, 2 (2012) 329-360. The archives of the CCIA on the trusteeship territories have unfortunately not yet been organized into a single file, which means that a more in-depth discussion of its human rights engagement in this area was not feasible in the context of the present study. From references in annual reports and other documents, it seems that the question of trusteeship, in which human rights language was ingrained from the start, may have been a site of comparably intensive ecumenical engagement in terms of human rights.

<sup>261</sup> See for example a passing reference to human rights on Kenya in CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1954-1955* (London and New York, 1955) 39.

<sup>262</sup> On British missionaries and decolonization in Africa, see John Stuart, *British Missionaries and the End of Empire: East, Central, and Southern Africa, 1939-1964* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011). On Algeria, see Darcie Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity: Religion and the End of Empire in France and Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>263</sup> Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria*, trans Dona Geyer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) 239; quoted in CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1957-1958* (London and New York, 1958) 38.

<sup>264</sup> Klose, *Human Rights*, 220. More recently, see Brian Drohan, *Brutality in an Age of Human Rights: Activism and Counterinsurgency at the End of the British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

upon all countries concerned to conform their actions to international standards of human rights in such manner as to command respect in the international community'.<sup>265</sup> Though a gradual rise in the salience of human rights in the intervening years may help account for this change in discourse, it also suggests that ecumenists understood the language of human rights to be disruptive to ongoing negotiations for independence, regardless of simultaneously ongoing violence, on which they sought to avoid taking sides. Once independence had been established, however, the WCC deployed human rights language in defense of the state's integrity. In this sense, human rights served as a tool to preserve order, not to upset it.

## Missionaries, postcolonial constitutions and Islam

Compared to metropolitan churches, missionaries in dependent territories frequently sought to distance themselves from the imperial structures that had enabled much of their work in the first place.<sup>266</sup> Given the close entanglement between mission, nation, and empire during the late-nineteenth century era of 'high colonialism', mid-twentieth century missionary critiques of empire were the outcome of a long trajectory.<sup>267</sup> World War I had shaken missionaries' confidence in Europe's moral standing, as it had that of the extra-European world. As Stuart has noted, towards the war's end, Protestant missionaries had begun to lobby for official recognition of the 'supranationality' of missions, in hopes of avoiding territorial restrictions on missionary work, arising from interstate strife. In subsequent years they also had also begun to encourage the indigenization of non-Western church leadership.<sup>268</sup> During the interwar period, many ecumenists came to see imperialism as arising from nationalism, which the universal church was meant to restrain. Michael G. Thompson has shown how the 1937 Oxford conference made this connection.<sup>269</sup> The International Missionary Council (IMC), founded in 1921 under the leadership of the British Joseph H. Oldham, led the way in softening

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<sup>265</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1964-1965* (London and New York, 1965) 35.

<sup>266</sup> This section and the following two have been published (with modifications) in my article, Bastiaan Bouwman, 'From Religious Freedom to Social Justice: The Human Rights Engagement of the Ecumenical Movement from the 1940s to the 1970s', *Journal of Global History*, 13, 2 (2018) 252-273.

<sup>267</sup> On this longer history, see Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); James G. Greenlee and Charles M. Johnston, *Good Citizens: British Missionaries and Imperial States, 1870-1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

<sup>268</sup> John Stuart, 'Beyond Sovereignty? Protestant Missions, Empire and Transnationalism, 1890-1950', in Kevin Grant and Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880-1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 103-125, on 109 and 121.

<sup>269</sup> Thompson, *For God and Globe*.

borders between missionaries (it would be integrated into the WCC in 1961) and loosening the connection between imperial power and Christian mission.

Then, the Second World War delivered another crushing blow to European claims of civilizational and racial superiority, stimulating further reflection on the relationship between empire and mission. Udi Greenberg has argued that it was the desire of ecumenists like Malik and WCC General Secretary W. A. Visser 't Hooft to restore Europe's Christian character that led them to believe that Christianity would have to extricate itself both from nationalism at home and imperialism abroad.<sup>270</sup> As Gene Zubovich has argued, the confrontation with communism and its real and perceived appeal to colonized peoples, moreover, forced ecumenical Christians to come to terms with their ties to empire. If communism represented a threat because of its materialism, its promise of universal equality also forced Protestants to scrutinize their own connections to the racialized hierarchies inherent in imperial rule.<sup>271</sup>

For missionaries, the imperative to disassociate themselves from empire became stronger as prospects for independence drew closer. If they were to have any hope of continuing their work in postcolonial societies they would have to redeem themselves from the affiliation with colonialism.<sup>272</sup> According to the missionary historian Adrian Hastings, the IMC and the WCC, as well as the Catholic Congregation de Propaganda Fide, were the most important bodies worldwide in cultivating a turn away from 'missionary nationalism'.<sup>273</sup> At the same time, missionaries by no means abandoned their work, which, beyond personal salvation, was understood to have implications for international order. As Charles W. Ranson, the Irish general secretary of the IMC, said at the CCIA's 1949 symposium on international affairs, 'the world is not likely to become more moral than it has been until it becomes more Christian than it is'.<sup>274</sup> Thus, missionaries could be simultaneously chastened by the past while a strong sense of purpose drove them to begin rethinking mission for a postcolonial age.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Udi Greenberg, 'Protestants, Decolonisation, and European Integration, 1885-1961', *Journal of Modern History*, 89, 2 (2017) 314-354.

<sup>271</sup> Gene Zubovich, 'The Protestant Search for "the Universal Christian Community" between Decolonisation and Communism', *Religions*, 8, 17 (2017), <http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/8/2/17>, accessed 16 June 2018.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Stuart, "Speaking for the Unvoiced?", 185. For a case study of this process in France and Algeria, see Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity*.

<sup>273</sup> Adrian Hastings, 'The Clash of Nationalism and Universalism within Twentieth-Century Missionary Christianity', in Brian Stanley and Alaine Low, eds., *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003) 15-33.

<sup>274</sup> Charles W. Ranson, 'Christian Missions and World Order', in Kenneth G. Grubb and O. Frederick Nolde, *Christian Responsibility in World Affairs: A Symposium under the Auspices of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs* (New York: CCIA, 1949) 11-14, on 14.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Stuart, 'Beyond Sovereignty?', 121.



The missionary movement saw itself beset by threats. At its 1928 Jerusalem conference, the IMC had defined its principal opponent: ‘secularism’. ‘Secularism’ was understood as not merely ‘neutrality’ towards the gospel but classified as a religion in its own right – a rejection of the church that led inexorably to ‘nihilism’ and ‘totalitarianism’.<sup>276</sup> At its 1947 Whitby conference, the IMC built on this analysis and specified the three enemies against which secularism would leave the world defenseless: ‘militant communism, resurgent Islam, and political Roman Catholicism’.<sup>277</sup> Each of these sought to impose a ‘totalitarian system’ on society, defined by the conference as one ‘which claims an absolute and unrestricted loyalty, regards difference of opinions as sedition, and refuses liberty of belief and practise to those who are not of one mind with itself’.<sup>278</sup> Ecumenical Christians would have to respond to the ‘totalitarianism’ of its opponents with one of its own, but of a different, transcendent kind: ‘wholehearted loyalty to God in Christ’.<sup>279</sup>

But this embrace of a higher loyalty did not mean that the IMC shunned secular instruments, on the contrary: at its September 1948 meeting, it welcomed the draft Universal Declaration of Human Rights and called for it to be developed into an international ‘Bill of Rights’, while simultaneously adopting the ‘Declaration on Religious Liberty’ of the WCC’s Amsterdam Assembly a month earlier.<sup>280</sup> This was not the first time the IMC drew on the language of human rights: as Stuart has observed, missionaries had described religious liberty as a ‘human right’ as early as the 1928 Jerusalem conference. Yet at this time, they had still paired it with a second ‘human right’: ‘the maintenance by each nation of law and order for all within its bounds’.<sup>281</sup> This second right stood in tension with the notion of international intervention in the name of human rights. It was only through the 1937 Oxford conference that religious freedom was connected with human rights as a principle of international order, as religious freedom was put forward as a condition for the legitimacy of states: ‘an essential element in a better international order is freedom of religion’.<sup>282</sup> From there on, as Stuart writes, missionary concern for religious liberty ‘became part of a much larger cause – that of human rights’.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Translation mine. Zendingconsulaat Batavia, ‘De conferentie van de International Missionary Council, Whitby – Canada, 5 – 24 juli 1947’, 5 April 1948, 6-7, Archives of the Raad voor de Zending, Utrechts Archief (hereafter RZ-UA) 501.

<sup>277</sup> Quoted in Zendingconsulaat Batavia, ‘De conferentie van de International Missionary Council, Whitby – Canada, 5 – 24 juli 1947’, 5 April 1948, 6 and 10, RZ-UA 501.

<sup>278</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>279</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>280</sup> IMC, *Minutes of the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Oegstgeest, the Netherlands, September 7-10, 1948* (London and New York: IMC, 1948) 27.

<sup>281</sup> Quoted in Stuart, ‘Empire, Mission, Ecumenism, and Human Rights’, 118.

<sup>282</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 121.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

Yet while the IMC, like the WCC, expressed support for ‘all the essential freedoms of man, whether personal, political or social’, its agenda would remain focused on religious freedom, where there existed a far greater consensus among its constituents than on questions related to other rights.<sup>284</sup>

Armed with ecumenical articulations of religious liberty, cast in the idiom of human rights, the missionary movement sought to safeguard its position, and that of Christian minorities more generally, in decolonizing countries. In the post-war period, during which processes of decolonization accelerated, the CCIA assisted numerous constituents in lobbying for constitutional provisions in line with the Universal Declaration’s Article 18 and ecumenical statements on religious freedom. The CCIA distributed two documents widely to church leaders, one providing advice on how to lobby for religious freedom in constitutions and one providing an overview of recently adopted provisions.<sup>285</sup> In a 1961 article on religious liberty, Nolde argued that human rights could be most effectively protected through ‘the mind and will of the people as reflected in constitutions, law, courts, and practice. It follows that action to promote the observance of human rights, if it is to be meaningful, must be domestic.’ He saw international action as complementary to this, especially ‘the very knowledge that the eyes of the world are upon the local scene and that world public opinion is increasingly ready to condemn or to commend’.<sup>286</sup> This was in line with the CCIA’s established views. In its 1950 study on dominant religions, the CCIA had written that in ‘almost all’ cases of religious discrimination, the ‘problem is essentially a domestic one and direct interference by an outside interested party is often resented and may be harmful’. Nevertheless, an ‘international standard can have domestic effect when enough people within a given community endorse the standard or desire to avoid the international embarrassment which is experienced when domestic practice is out of line’.<sup>287</sup> This did not mean that Nolde, who continued to work for the development of the UN Covenants on human rights, did not envision a future in which a more robust international enforcement system would exist. But in his view, writing in 1961, truly effective measures for international enforcement would only ‘be attainable in proportion to the achievement of an *international*

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<sup>284</sup> IMC, *Minutes, September 7-10, 1948*, 27.

<sup>285</sup> O. Frederick Nolde, ‘Notes on procedures for securing constitutional safeguards for religious liberty’, 26 October 1954, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.2; and CCIA, ‘Constitutional provisions for religious liberty: a compilation of provisions in constitutions recently adopted and in constitutions operative for a transitional period’, 1957, WCC CCIA 428.6.24 CCIA Country files/Nigeria [unnumbered first box; alternative designation, per inventory by Dwain C. Epps: 428.16.1.38].

<sup>286</sup> Offprint of O. Frederick Nolde, ‘Religious Liberty Considered as an International Problem’, *Ecumenical Review*, 13, 4 (1961) 5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>287</sup> MRCC 1950, 80.

*ethos*'.<sup>288</sup> While the CCIA had been tasked for years with developing ecumenical thought on such an 'ethos', it never succeeded in producing significant results.<sup>289</sup> And while 'inter-governmental action' could in some cases be helpful, Nolde recognized its present results were 'quite meagre'.<sup>290</sup> Thus, given the importance of the domestic sphere and the impotence of international instruments, the most promising approach was one that focused on anchoring religious freedom within a society rather than counting on international pressure for protection.

Achieving this still required international activity, of course, and thus, in practice, the CCIA's activity straddled the domestic and the international spheres. Through its activity in influencing constitutions, the ecumenical movement sought to inject its ideals directly into the groundwater of the domestic sphere. A key area of ecumenical concern for religious freedom was in majority Muslim societies in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.<sup>291</sup> This section discusses two key cases in which ecumenical human rights discourse played a role in negotiating the future relationship between Muslims and Protestants in majority Muslim countries: Indonesia and Nigeria. Each represented a large Muslim population (in Indonesia's case, the world's largest). While in Indonesia, ecumenists' initial success soon faced setbacks, the protections of religious freedom applied in Nigeria were emulated in numerous other countries emerging from British colonialism.

### *Religious freedom and the Indonesian Revolution*

In late August 1945, the newly proclaimed Republican government in Jakarta adopted a constitution that had been drafted before the Japanese surrender, by the Japanese-established Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence. The constitution was 'short and skeletal (...) more like notes for a constitution than a comprehensive basis for a new state'.<sup>292</sup> The Committee had initially envisioned an obligation in the constitution's preamble for Muslims to abide by Islamic law (part of the so-called Jakarta Charter) as well as the requirement that the head of state should be a

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<sup>288</sup> Offprint of O. Frederick Nolde, 'Religious Liberty Considered as an International Problem', *Ecumenical Review*, 13, 4 (1961) 5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>289</sup> Pamela Slotte, "'Blessed are the Peacemakers": Christian Internationalism, Ecumenical Voices and the Quest for Human Rights', in Pamela Slotte and Miia Halme-Tuomisaari, eds., *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 293-329, on 328.

<sup>290</sup> Offprint of O. Frederick Nolde, 'Religious Liberty Considered as an International Problem', *Ecumenical Review*, 13, 4 (1961) 5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>291</sup> On Egypt, see Stuart, 'Empire, Mission, Ecumenism, and Human Rights'; cf. Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>292</sup> Simon Butt and Timothy Lindsey, *The Constitution of Indonesia: A Contextual Analysis* (Oxford: Hart, 2012) 2.

Muslim. According to M. C. Ricklefs, a warning from the Japanese Navy ‘that Christian Indonesians in its area would disapprove of any special role for Islam’ led nationalist leaders to abandon these proposals, though they would come back to haunt the government in the late 1950s.<sup>293</sup> In Article 29, the constitution established the religious foundation of the state in language acceptable to both Christians and Muslims, and set out a provision for freedom of religion: ‘The State is based on the belief in the Divine Omnipotence. (...) The State guarantees the freedom of every resident to profess his own religion and to worship according to his religion and belief.’<sup>294</sup>

Facing the prospect of independence, Christians in Indonesia were apprehensive about their future as a small and in many places tiny religious minority. As Hans van de Wal has described, at an August 1946 meeting on the future of mission in Indonesia, the sociologist and missionary pastor C. L. van Doorn argued that Dutch Christians should avoid taking a defensive posture. This would require them not to cloister themselves or to adopt an air of superiority but instead to join Indonesians “‘in the establishment of an Indonesian state, governed by the rule of law”, guided by the gospel’.<sup>295</sup> However, the second speaker, the missionary consul J. C. Hoekendijk, focused on the issue of religious freedom, on the basis of a memorandum drafted on his initiative by the ecumenical *Contact Commissie Kerk en Zending* (Church and Mission Contact Commission). This memorandum expressed worries about the possibility of Islamic pressure outside the main islands of Java and Sumatra. In his accompanying address, Hoekendijk cited historical examples from the Middle East in which Christians were relegated to second-class citizenship and gave an overview of ecumenical discussions on the issue of religious freedom.<sup>296</sup>

The memorandum was sent to Lt. Governor-General H. J. van Mook, the head of the Dutch East Indies government. The churches and missionaries quoted as their point of departure the 1944 San Francisco statement of the American Joint Committee on Religious Liberty (JCRL), a precursor to the Universal Declaration’s Article 18. They explicitly rejected the possibility of safeguarding religious freedom through a system of minority rights, because history had shown ‘that the maintenance of the rights of a minority in fact never rises above permitting the status quo to be maintained’, whereas religion contained a ‘dynamic element’, as revealed through its ‘missionary-

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<sup>293</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1981) 262.

<sup>294</sup> I use here the official translation, but draw from Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur: Equinox Publishing, 2007; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1962) 98.

<sup>295</sup> Quoted in Hans van de Wal, *Tot op het bot verdeeld: Nederlandse protestanten, de zending en de Indonesische revolutie* [*Hopelessly Divided: Dutch Protestants, Mission, and the Indonesian Revolution*] (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012) 119.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-20.

expansionary character'.<sup>297</sup> The letter then went on to invoke the UN Charter's provisions for religious freedom, which the letter asserted went beyond freedom of worship to include observance, organization, and (missionary) activities, within the boundaries of the law. The Charter in fact merely mentioned religion in its non-discrimination clauses, but the UN's involvement in the Dutch-Indonesian conflict after January 1946 made it a salient point of reference. The authors also distinguished between a set of six rights that the church was due as a religious body, from the establishment of its own liturgy to the freedom to carry out philanthropic work, and five rights of individual believers, including the right to change one's religion and to spread one's faith through witness and education (stopping short of an explicit right to propagate or evangelize). The call to recognize the corporate rights of the church reflected the legacy of pre-war ecumenical statements on religious freedom, coming ahead of the Amsterdam Assembly's greater emphasis on the individual believer in its 'Declaration on Religious Liberty'.

From 1-12 October 1946, the Dutch East-Indies government held a conference at which it solicited the views of minorities on their future in a federal Indonesia. The Dutch theologian J. Verkuyl made an appeal not only to religious freedom but to 'human rights', while referring to the UN Charter and the JCRL's statement.<sup>298</sup> According to Hoekendijk, as a result of Verkuyl's efforts 'the short Statement on Religious Liberty was officially adopted as a general directive'.<sup>299</sup> In November, Verkuyl and Hoekendijk's replacement, U.H. van Beyma, again petitioned the Dutch East-Indies government, this time more specifically to safeguard religious freedom in the future Indonesian constitution.<sup>300</sup>

The efforts by Dutch missionaries seem to have turned from the Dutch to the Indonesians since, in the November 1946 Linggadjati Agreement, it was agreed that drafting the provisional constitution would be up to the Indonesians.<sup>301</sup> Hoekendijk recollected that after an address on religious liberty that he had given at a missionary conference in Batavia in August 1946, a number of 'the Indonesians present took this address with them to Eastern Indonesia [with its substantial Christian populations] and accepted the statement with our interpretation'. He also wrote that 'the memoranda prepared by our group found there [sic] way through under ground [sic] channels to

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<sup>297</sup> Raad voor de Zending to Lt. Governor-General H. J. van Mook, 1946, 2, RZ-UA 7213.

<sup>298</sup> Quoted in Van de Wal, *Tot op het bot*, 173.

<sup>299</sup> A.L. Warnshuis to Nolde, Roswell P. Barnes, and Wynn C. Fairfield, 24 January 1950, enclosure, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Asia/Indonesia 1948-1968, Indonesia, Republic of, 1948-66.

<sup>300</sup> Van de Wal, *Tot op het bot*, 173.

<sup>301</sup> P.J. Drooglever, 'The Genesis of the Indonesian Constitution of 1949', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 153, 1 (1997) 65-84, on 81.

Djokja [Yogyakarta]’, the Republican capital. And Hoekendijk recounted, with pride, that he and colleagues including Verkuyl had successfully introduced the JCRL’s statement on religious liberty ‘into one of the recommendations of an [unspecified] *official political* meeting’, a fact which they had then referenced to build further support. He also noted the particular utility of having an ecumenical statement to which they could refer: ‘We never gave it in Dutch and always pointed to the fact that this was not a Western, but an *ecumenical* principle.’<sup>302</sup>

Between 1947 and 1949, the Netherlands undertook two major military offensives to quash the Republic of Indonesia, severely damaging the prospects of future bilateral relations and prompting international outrage. Dutch missionaries were more critical of these developments than the vast majority of churches in the Netherlands, leading to conflict with those who refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Indonesians’ desire for full-fledged independence. At the same time, they continued their efforts to promote religious freedom in the federal constitution. In a 1949 memorandum, the ecumenical *Raad voor de Zending* [Missionary Council] quoted Searle Bates’ 1945 *A Study of Religious Liberty* – Hoekendijk, who had received a copy from the American missionary leader A. L. Warnshuis after a 1945 visit to New York, would later say it had been ‘our textbook’<sup>303</sup> – which stated that Indonesia’s Muslims ‘are less fanatical than the more intense people of the Near East’. Yet while the Dutch missionaries agreed, they held that ‘throughout all of Islam there [is] visible a certain inclination, tendency, with regard to the way in which the community of Christ is approached’.<sup>304</sup> Protestants saw a desire to enable government restriction of missionary activity in attempts by the Indonesian Muslim Party to preserve a legal provision known as article 177, which required the Governor-General to give missionaries permission to operate in a given area.<sup>305</sup> Another indicator was a recent parliamentary session in the *Negara Indonesia Timur*, the Dutch-established ‘State of East Indonesia’, in which Muslims, joined by Bali Hindus, had passed a law that allowed the interdiction of missionary activity if it threatened ‘public order’.<sup>306</sup> For the missionaries, abandoning evangelization was not an option,

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<sup>302</sup> Warnshuis to Nolde, Barnes, and Fairfield, enclosure, 1 (*italics in original*).

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>304</sup> Raad voor de Zending, ‘Aantekeningen over godsdienstvrijheid met inachtneming van de situatie in Indonesië’, 1949, 7, RZ-UA 3376.

<sup>305</sup> Gerard Slotemaker de Bruijne, ‘Artikel 177 en de Islam’, n.d. [probably late 1947], RZ-UA 7213.

<sup>306</sup> J. Verkuyl and C.O.A. van Nieuwenhuyzen, ‘Indonesia: background’, March 1950, in CCIA, ‘Religious freedom in face of dominant forces: part III: religious domination: reports on selected areas’, July 1950, 6, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.1.4.16.

because ‘this would mean the death of the church (...). So this freedom will have to be fought for continuously.’<sup>307</sup>

The arsenal from which missionaries drew the weapons to fight for their conception of religious freedom was, as in 1946, largely provided by the ecumenical movement’s work on religious liberty, now expanded with the Amsterdam Assembly’s 1948 declaration, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and a WCC document about ‘The Marxist Conception of Religious Liberty’ (the inclusion of this cautionary assessment reflected concerns that communism might become a major force in Indonesian politics). Most importantly, the *Raad* indicated its support for the religious freedom provisions suggested for the future Indonesian constitution by Verkuyl in his 1948 dissertation.<sup>308</sup> The memorandum claimed that Verkuyl’s proposal ‘certainly was a source of inspiration in [the constitution of the] N[egara].I[ndonesia].T[imur]’, the provisions of which were also provided in full. Verkuyl’s proposal included the freedom to evangelize and the right to change one’s religion. According to the *Raad* it was a ‘maximum elaboration of the the [sic] definition of San Francisco’. While its full adoption was considered unlikely, it was considered the ideal outcome for which to strive.<sup>309</sup>

At the July 1949 Inter-Indonesian Conference in Yogyakarta and Batavia, the Republican and Federalist factions among the Indonesians worked out a provisional constitution, in which they decided to include the full text of the Universal Declaration’s Article 18.<sup>310</sup> The Dutch accepted this draft without significant change at the Round Table Conference in October.<sup>311</sup> Nolde observed that the 1949 constitution’s provisions on human rights were ‘encouraging’.<sup>312</sup> This constitution lasted only a few months, as the federal state was overturned in favour of a unitary one, but it was the basis on which the 1950 provisional constitution was drafted.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Raad voor de Zending, ‘Aantekeningen over godsdienstvrijheid met inachtneming van de situatie in Indonesië’, 1949, 7, RZ-UA 3376.

<sup>308</sup> J. Verkuyl, *Enkele aspecten van het probleem der godsdienstvrijheid in Azië* [*Some Aspects of the Problem of Religious Liberty in Asia*] (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1948).

<sup>309</sup> Raad voor de Zending, ‘Aantekeningen over godsdienstvrijheid met inachtneming van de situatie in Indonesië’, 1949, 7 and 16, RZ-UA 3376.

<sup>310</sup> ‘244. Besluiten van het tweede gedeelte van de Inter-Indonesische Conferentie gehouden te Batavia van 31 juli tot 2 aug. 1949.’, in P.J. Drooglever and M.J.B. Schouten, eds., *Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische Betrekkingen 1945-1950: Negentiende deel, 1 juni 1949 – 15 september 1949* [*Official Documents Concerning Dutch-Indonesian Relations 1945-1950: Volume Nineteen, 1 June 1949 – 15 September 1949*] (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1994) 441.

<sup>311</sup> Drooglever, ‘Indonesian constitution of 1949’, 78-81.

<sup>312</sup> Nolde to Wilhelm Menn, 9 November 1949, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Europe/Germany 1947-1950/Germany/CCIA Correspondence 1946-1950 New York Office.

<sup>313</sup> Butt and Lindsey, *The Constitution of Indonesia*, 3-4.

Yet while both the 1949 and 1950 constitutions included human rights provisions based on the Universal Declaration, the 1950 constitution was far less explicit regarding freedom of religion. While the 1949 constitution had copied the Universal Declaration's Article 18, the 1950 constitution truncated the language to focus only on 'inner' freedom: 'Everyone is entitled to freedom of religion, conscience, and thought.' A separate provision, Article 43, maintained language from the 1949 constitution on the religious nature of the state and religious freedom. The government claimed that the two articles combined sufficiently covered 'the intention of' the Universal Declaration's Article 18, in allowing for evangelization, the right to change one's religion, and parental choice in religious education.<sup>314</sup> Ecumenical Christians worried, however, that the freedom to 'profess' one's religion and the only implicit recognition of the right to change one's religion constituted a substantial reduction in the scope of the freedom to manifest religion in Indonesian society. Questioned in parliament, Prime Minister Mohammed Hatta explained that the article had been shortened because the previous formulation 'could be interpreted as a kind of recommendation to change one's religion', as a church periodical reported; it added the supposition that Muslim pressure likely explained the change.<sup>315</sup>

Religious freedom remained contested through the 1950s.<sup>316</sup> Even before the constitutional change, Dutch ecumenists saw the newly established Ministry of Religion as 'nothing but a Ministry for Moslem Interests'.<sup>317</sup> When the process of formulating a permanent constitution began in the late 1950s, Indonesian Christian representatives, both Protestant and Catholic, pushed for the insertion of the Universal Declaration's Article 18.<sup>318</sup> Indonesian Christian leaders such as Rev. W. J. Rumambi and J. C. T. Simorangkir, who were also leaders of the Indonesian Council of Churches (founded in 1950), participated in the debates and called for the secular nature of the state to be maintained.<sup>319</sup> These debates became deadlocked, because Islamic representatives attempted to insert the Jakarta Charter's phrase on Islamic law while others resisted this.<sup>320</sup> Meanwhile, Sukarno proposed the

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<sup>314</sup> R. Supomo., *The Provisional Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia: With Annotations and Explanations on each Article*, trans. Garth N. Jones (Ann Arbor, MI: Cornell University Modern Indonesia Project, 1964) 20 and 31-32.

<sup>315</sup> M.H. Bolkestein, 'Godsdienstvrijheid in Indonesië', *De Hervormde Kerk*, n.d. [25 November 1950], 3, WCCA CCIA Country Files/Asia/Indonesia 1948-1968, Religious liberty.

<sup>316</sup> Henk Schulte Noordholt, 'Indonesia in the 1950s: Nation, Modernity, and the Post-Colonial State', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 167, 4 (2011) 396-397.

<sup>317</sup> Verkuyl and van Nieuwenhuyzen, 'Indonesia', 7.

<sup>318</sup> Thomas van den End and Jan Sihar Aritonang, '1800-2005: A National Overview', in Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008) 137-228, on 199.

<sup>319</sup> Jan Sihar Aritonang, 'The Ecumenical Movement in Indonesia with Special Attention to the National Council of Churches', in Aritonang and Steenbrink, *Christianity in Indonesia*, 823-865, on 843.

<sup>320</sup> Riecklefs, *Indonesia*, 321.



establishment of a governmental system termed ‘Guided Democracy’, and in 1957 he effectively suspended the constitution. On 5 July 1959 Sukarno reinstated the 1945 constitution by decree and stated that the Jakarta Charter did not form a legal part of the constitution, thus ensuring the secular character of the state.<sup>321</sup> Yet the return to the 1945 constitution meant a further reduction in the constitutional protection of religious freedom and a blow to ecumenical aspirations (as well as a general slide into authoritarianism).

### *Kenneth Grubb and religious freedom in Northern Nigeria*

Nigeria, and especially Northern Nigeria, was an important focus of the CCIA’s work in the 1950s, because of the missionary and Christian minority interests there. While the country as a whole was characterized by significant religious diversity, including large Christian populations, the North was almost two-thirds Muslim, with most others ‘following their tribal beliefs and a small Christian minority’.<sup>322</sup> The CCIA had a long-established connection with the churches through the Christian Council in Nigeria (founded in 1930). This section focuses on the role of the ecumenical movement in bringing about Nigeria’s 1959 bill of rights, which included provisions on religious liberty in line with ecumenical desiderata. Once the constitution had enshrined religious freedom, ecumenical leaders in independent Nigeria saw in these provisions a key instrument to preserve ‘the right to propagate our faith’ (at least until the military coup in 1966, which is beyond the scope of this chapter).<sup>323</sup>

While constitution-making in Nigeria had a long history, with respect to human rights, it entered a new phase in the 1950s. In 1953, the Methodist Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the Action Group, which represented Nigeria’s Western Region, had taken the initiative in crafting a bill of rights for Nigeria. A London-trained lawyer, as well as a teacher and trade union leader, Awolowo enlisted the support of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, which controlled the Eastern Region, led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. (It should be noted that Azikiwe, who would go on to become Nigeria’s first president, had already in August 1943 initiated a document on ‘The Atlantic

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<sup>321</sup> Yong Cheong, ‘The Political Structures of the Independent States’, in Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol. 2: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 387-465, on 423-424.

<sup>322</sup> Charles O. H. Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation: The Emergence of Domestic Human Rights Instruments in Britain’s Overseas Territories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 134.

<sup>323</sup> S.I. Kale and H. Hogan, ‘Christian responsibility in an independent Nigeria’, n.d. [probably 1962], 100, WCCA General Secretariat documentation/Nigeria.

Charter and British West Africa’, which, according to Anderson, ‘laid out a human rights agenda for the “post-war reconstruction of the colonies and protectorates” of Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, and Sierra Leone’, aimed at developing them into “full-fledged democratic States”’.<sup>324</sup>) Awolowo and Azikiwe’s joint proposal drew inspiration from the Indian constitution (which had in turn drawn inspiration from the United States) and included provisions on the freedom of religion. However, the Northern Region opposed the idea of a bill of rights and the Colonial Office’s view at the time was that bills of rights were ineffective or even dangerous. According to Stanley De Smith, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, responded to the proposal of a bill of rights ‘by laughing the idea out of the conference room’.<sup>325</sup> By 1955, however, as described by Charles Parkinson, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Governor General of Nigeria had both been replaced by officials more sympathetic to bills of rights. The new Governor General, Sir James Robertson, also convinced the Northern People’s Congress that a bill of rights could protect the population of the Northern Region from discrimination by the southern regions. Thus, the alignment of forces had shifted and the notion of a bill of rights started gaining traction. At this time, the Christian Council of Churches in Nigeria and the CCIA, especially its chairman, Grubb – who was also the President of the Anglican Church Missionary Society – began to push for the inclusion of religious freedom, which would result in its inclusion in the 1959 bill of rights.<sup>326</sup>

Ecumenical efforts to include the Universal Declaration’s Article 18 in Nigerian constitutional provisions got underway in 1955, as the records of a meeting between Grubb, Nigerian church and missionary representatives, and the regional government of the North illustrate.<sup>327</sup> It seems likely that such representations were what the Northern Region’s governor referred to when he notified the Colonial Office, in August 1955, that ‘people were nervous about the prospect of early self-government and the absence, so far, of a Northern “Declaration of Human Rights” with particular regard for religious freedom’. Parkinson credits this missive with setting in motion the Colonial Office’s acceptance of the need for constitutional protection of religious freedom, though it did not yet want a bill of rights.<sup>328</sup> Subsequently, Grubb had lunch with Tom Williamson, the lead on Nigerian

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<sup>324</sup> Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 18.

<sup>325</sup> Stanley De Smith, *The New Commonwealth and Its Constitutions* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1964) 167. My thanks to Roger Clark for drawing my attention to this work and the case of Nigeria.

<sup>326</sup> Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, 135-140.

<sup>327</sup> Council of Churches in Nigeria and Sudan Interior Mission, Minutes of meeting with the Civil Secretary of the Northern Region of Nigeria, 20 April 1955, 2-5, WCC CCIA 428.6.24 Country files/Nigeria [unnumbered first box]

<sup>328</sup> Quoted in Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, 140-141.

affairs in the Colonial Office's West Africa Department, who showed him the draft proposal for a constitution for Northern Nigeria. Grubb made two points regarding religious liberty, namely the need to secure freedom to change one's religion and the right of parents to choose their children's religious instruction, both of which were favourably received. However, reporting on the approach, Grubb noted an important reservation made by Williamson, who had said that he and his colleagues 'did not like to proceed "by reference to the Declaration of Human Rights" but preferred an approach by reference to constitutional provisions which may be obtainable in other colonial constitutions'. Specifically, he had in mind the Sudan Self-Government Statute. Williamson 'attributed this attitude to a general dislike both among parliamentarians and higher officials at the Colonial Office to the activities of the United Nations in regard to dependent peoples', an attitude that reflected a dislike of international scrutiny and an attachment to established colonial legislation. Nevertheless, Grubb pressed Williamson to promise that he would 'study Article 18 and other relevant articles in the Declaration'.<sup>329</sup>

Article 18 did make its way into Colonial Office policy, after a church and missionary delegation met with John Hare, the Minister of State (standing in for the Secretary of State for the Colonies), on 16 July 1956. The delegation was led by representatives of the British Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, but also included Grubb, the Rev. Canon C.A. Forster, Secretary of the Christian Council in Nigeria, and the heads of the Overseas Council of the Church of England and the Free Church Federal Council. Though the CCIA archives do not include minutes of the meeting, a document prepared by the British Council of Churches – an important constituent of the WCC – setting out its requests, opened with a call to include Universal Declaration Articles 18 and 19 into the federal and regional constitutions being prepared for Nigeria, with special reference to the North, because of its government's 'substantial Muslim majority'. A line at the end noted that while the CCIA 'has been kept informed (...) [it] seemed more convenient to make the present approach through the British Council of Churches'.<sup>330</sup> The meeting prompted the Colonial Office to add the Universal Declaration's rights to change one's religion and to propagate it to the religious freedom provision of the Sudan Self-Government Statute. Pressure from the three Nigerian

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<sup>329</sup> Kenneth G. Grubb to Kenneth Slack, 'Religious Freedom in Northern Nigeria', 16 May 1955, 2. Cf. Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, 144, WCC CCIA 428.6.24 Country files/Nigeria [unnumbered first box].

<sup>330</sup> British Council of Churches, 'Nigeria – Religious Liberty and Human Rights', July 1956, WCC CCIA 428.6.24 Country files/Nigeria [unnumbered first box].

regions at the 1957 constitutional conference then contributed to the expansion of this minimalist commitment into a full-fledged bill of rights, a departure from long-established British policy.<sup>331</sup>

The following year, Grubb spent almost a month in Nigeria. In his report on religious liberty he wrote that Nigeria was ‘the key area in Christian/Moslem confrontation in Africa’. Grubb worried that in the North, with its majority Muslim population, unlike in the East or the West, ‘the new nationalism’ might ‘turn against the missionary from overseas’. Meeting with Ahmadu Bello, the premier of Northern Nigeria, Grubb asked him to confirm the right to change one’s religion, to which Bello ‘emphatically’ assented while voicing a qualification with respect to ‘law and order’. Grubb felt that Bello’s expressed support for rights and freedoms was ‘probably only words’. At a subsequent meeting, the Acting Governor of Northern Nigeria indicated that he shared Grubb’s skepticism.<sup>332</sup>

In Lagos, Grubb met with the newly established Minorities Commission, headed by Henry Willink, which had been tasked with addressing calls for minority protections. The otherwise pressured and overburdened body indicated that it was eager to receive a memorandum from the Christian Council in Nigeria. With Grubb’s assistance in drafting, the Council sent a memorandum to the Commission in December 1957, expressing its desire that ‘the Federal and Regional constitutions of our country should contain satisfactory guarantees of human rights and freedoms’, in the interests of ‘the peaceful development of the country and the religious interests of all’, given its nature as a ‘multi-communal state’. It echoed ecumenical wording in asserting that in such a society, ‘no religion should claim or possess rights, privileges, or freedoms which are denied to any other religion’. The appeal listed seven specific religious rights, including the freedom to change one’s religion, the freedom of parents to choose their children’s religious education, and the freedom ‘to establish and operate institutions for religious and charitable purposes’, all long-standing priorities of the CCIA. The Christian Council followed up these religious rights with a set of four more general human rights, most importantly non-discrimination: ‘the equality of all before the law, regardless of race, tribe, religion, or sex’. The document clearly showed the influence of the CCIA, through the focus on particular religious rights and the actual wording, as well as through their connection to human rights in general.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, 145, 150.

<sup>332</sup> Kenneth G. Grubb, ‘Religious Liberty in Nigeria’, December 1957, 1-4, WCC CCIA 428.6.24 Country files/Nigeria [unnumbered first box]

<sup>333</sup> Council of Churches in Nigeria to the Minorities Commission, December 1957, 1-3, WCC CCIA 428.6.24 Country files/Nigeria [unnumbered first box].

The intervention by Grubb and his Nigerian-based colleagues dovetailed with the interests of the Minorities Commission and the Colonial Office. The report of the Willink Commission made repeated reference to the ‘Christian bodies’ that had made representations on ‘certain fundamental rights’, which it singled out for positive comment, as opposed to ‘almost all the witnesses’, who ‘were insistent that nothing but a separate state could meet their problems’. These ‘Christian bodies’ were in fact only Grubb and the Christian Council in Nigeria, since no other group had called for a bill of rights as a means of protecting minorities.<sup>334</sup> The Commission’s report adhered closely to the desiderata put forward in the Council’s memorandum. The drafters of the proposed bill of rights had not taken the Universal Declaration as a source but instead (in the absence of a British bill of rights) drawn on the European Convention on Human Rights. However, since the latter’s Article 9 was virtually identical to the Universal Declaration’s provision, this mattered little with respect to religious freedom. The Minorities Commission also included two clauses on religious education borrowed from the Pakistani constitution. Strikingly, the report even went on to list six religious rights that it recommended be specifically taken up in drafting the constitution, a list apparently lifted almost directly from the Council’s memorandum.<sup>335</sup> While the Colonial Office refused to take up these latter rights, for fear of incurring Muslim outrage, the remaining protections fulfilled ecumenical hopes.<sup>336</sup> The Nigerian bill of rights then served as a model for many other British overseas territories obtaining independence: Sierra Leone, Jamaica, Uganda, Kenya, Malta, British Guiana, Aden, and Nyasaland (of Commonwealth countries, only Ghana and Tanganyika did not enact ‘justiciable bills of rights’).<sup>337</sup> Thus, the activities of the CCIA and the Council of Christian Churches in Nigeria had obtained a major coup in securing religious freedom provisions in decolonizing countries.

## Conclusions

Although the above account has shown how missionaries used the secular language of UN human rights to protect their interests, it would be wrong to assume that they therefore abandoned religiously-grounded conceptions of religious liberty. Among missionaries operating in majority Muslim

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<sup>334</sup> Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, 151.

<sup>335</sup> *Nigeria: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1958) 98 and 102-103.

<sup>336</sup> Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, 161-162.

<sup>337</sup> De Smith, *The New Commonwealth and Its Constitutions*, 193-196.

countries, religious freedom continued to be conceived of as a fundamentally Christian principle, as illustrated by a 1965 consultation held in Jerusalem, on 'Religious Liberty in Muslim Lands'. The American Rev. Melvin Wittler, Field Secretary of the Near East Mission of the United Church Board for World Ministries, praised the studies and statements of the WCC, and emphasized the fundamentally Christian basis of religious liberty, as an '*implication* of the Christian faith', namely 'the freedom which God has given man'. In contrast, from 'the juridical point of view, religious liberty is a fundamental human right'. What this meant for the basis of Muslim-Christian relations remained ambiguous, however. Participants felt that the secular conception of religious liberty was not a sufficient basis for 'inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims', but 'it may be the means by which Christians and Muslims come to understand liberty'.<sup>338</sup> This tension between pragmatic coexistence on a secular basis and the promise of more deep-rooted mutual understanding through what would come to be called interfaith dialogue calls for further study. What this chapter suggests, however, is that the ecumenical movement's advocacy of religious liberty, based on its fear of the 'totalitarian' potential of Islam in postcolonial societies, stood in tension with the desire to extricate itself from the legacies of empire and build new foundations for Muslim-Christian relations.

How did religious liberty change through its integration into human rights? For one, it meant that ecumenical advocates of human rights were led to place greater emphasis on individual violations of religious freedom than had earlier systems for protecting religious liberty, such as the League of Nations' Minority Protection Regime.<sup>339</sup> At the same time, as Lindkvist has noted, the churches continued to draw attention to corporate rights, which were an essential part of their underlying conception of religious liberty, and thus went beyond the limits of what the UN's formulation contained.<sup>340</sup> The metamorphosis of religious freedom into a human right arguably made ecumenical advocacy of religious liberty more acceptable to non-Christian audiences, broadening its definition beyond merely Christian privileges. The process of indigenization of missionary work and its integration into indigenous church structures also contributed to changing the question of religious freedom from one of protecting foreign missionaries and churchmen to one of protecting indigenous Christians. Assessing the effects of these changes is beyond this study, but it seems evident that the outcome depended a great deal on local circumstances and politics. Nevertheless, it would seem

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<sup>338</sup> Melvin Wittler, 'Final Report of a Consultation on Religious Liberty in Muslim Lands, Jerusalem, July 19-24, 1965', September 1965, 13-15, WCCA IMC 26.16.08.

<sup>339</sup> On the discontinuity between minority rights and human rights, see Mark Mazower, 'The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950', *The Historical Journal*, 47, 2 (2004) 379-398.

<sup>340</sup> Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, 138.

plausible that the recasting of religious liberty in universal and secular terms facilitated dialogue with other religions as well as with non-believers. At the same time, as Lindkvist has emphasized, and as critics have also pointed out, the formulation of Article 18 was geared to serve particular concerns, such as the freedom to evangelize, and not others.<sup>341</sup> The curtailment of the 1949 Indonesian constitution's provisions demonstrated that the country's Muslim majority found this formulation unacceptable.

In relation to the historiography of human rights, it is worth dwelling here on the categories of the national, international, and transnational. In the sense that the ecumenical movement pursued a 'universal community of faith that would recognise no distinctions based on nation, race, or class', it transcended other categories.<sup>342</sup> But the category of the nation in fact remained of great importance, both because spiritual fellowship was never meant to altogether repudiate political allegiances and because supranational schemes of governance, embodied most hopefully by the UN, did not come close to substituting for them. The CCIA's focus on establishing constitutional religious freedom provisions testifies to the priority it accorded to the domestic sphere, whereas international human rights politics could only be hoped to play a corrective role. As Nolde's thinking on the subject showed, the CCIA ascribed positive value to domestic human rights provisions, since these more securely anchored religious freedom than international enforcement could. Intergovernmental action could be called for when, in spite of this, religious freedom was violated – a possibility the CCIA was all too aware of – but 'world public opinion' could only play a supplementary role. The ecumenical movement's transnational engagement to insert the UN-approved conception of religious freedom into the groundwater of newly independent states thus complicates the distinction often made in the historiography of human rights between international and national rights language: in the context of Nigeria and Indonesia, international standards were anchored in a domestic context. The relative power of ecumenical lobbying efforts in this context helps account for this outcome – as the next chapter shows, when faced with more powerful and unified opposition, it had to fall back on attempts at dialogue, coupled with efforts at generating internal and external pressure.

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 145-147.

<sup>342</sup> Terence Renaud, 'Human Rights as Radical Anthropology: Protestant Theology and Ecumenism in the Transwar Era', *The Historical Journal*, 60, 2 (2016) 1-26, on 3.

### 3. ‘Error has no rights’: religious freedom in Spain from the Second World War through the Second Vatican Council

‘[I]t is true that two weights and two measures must be used: one for truth and the other for error’.<sup>343</sup>  
Cardinal Ottaviani, 1953

‘Ecumenical and other church bodies should continue to maintain that there *can be* room for a normal existence for a Protestant minority in an officially Roman Catholic state, especially when the latter is committed to the Charter of the United Nations’.<sup>344</sup> – Report on the view of the Legal Commission of the Union Theological Seminary in Madrid, 1956

#### Introduction

In fascist Spain, the World Council of Churches (WCC) faced an opponent whose intransigence rivaled that of the Soviet Union – but which was Christian. According to John Pollard, after the Second World War the Vatican was ‘not fully reconciled’ to liberal democracy and saw Spain and Portugal, in particular, as “‘ideal” Catholic states’.<sup>345</sup> The tiny Protestant minorities of these countries were branded suspect, partly due to allegations of collusion with international communism. But fundamentally, Protestantism was perceived as a threat to the moral foundations of Catholic societies, in which the Church played a prominent and pervasive role – in the case of Spain, as the state religion. Protestants could thus not be allowed religious freedom, and certainly not as a human right, as the WCC had claimed religious freedom should be recognized. As Pollard writes, ‘[u]ntil the end of Pius XII’s reign [in 1958], the Vatican remained uncomfortable with and suspicious of human rights: they smacked too much of nineteenth-century liberalism.’ He continues: ‘[t]he human “right” which really troubled the papacy was, of course, in relation to religion. (...) All this was based on a long-held and long-practised conviction that “error has no rights”’.<sup>346</sup> In line with this, on 2 March

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<sup>343</sup> Quoted in Jacques Delpech, *The Oppression of Protestants in Spain*, trans. Tom and Dolores Johnson (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956) 102.

<sup>344</sup> WCC, ‘The Continuing Crisis Confronting the Union Theological Seminary in Madrid: A Confidential Report to the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Vienna, July 26-27, 1956’, 3, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain. Madrid Theological Seminary.

<sup>345</sup> John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014) 476.

<sup>346</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 476.



1953, Cardinal Ottaviani, Pro-Secretary of the Congregation of the Holy Office, gave a speech on ‘The Duties of the Catholic State Toward Religion’, which ‘aroused world-wide interest’. Ottaviani referred to the WCC’s Amsterdam Assembly as an example of Protestant disunity. He argued for an expansive meaning of religious freedom for Catholics and a reduced freedom for others: ‘it is true that two weights and two measures must be used: one for truth and the other for error’. In a surprising twist, Ottaviani then invoked the language of human rights, but in a way directly opposed to the meaning the ecumenical movement attributed to it: ‘[n]o one should be astounded that the Church, wherever Divine Rights are ignored, invokes, at the very least, respect for Human Rights’.<sup>347</sup> In this rendering, human rights meant the right to be Catholic.

Historians have recently begun excavating Catholic human rights discourse from the 1930s to the 1950s. Often, they have argued for the conservative and deeply religious nature of this discourse, so as to challenge established narratives that stress the supposedly secular and progressive origins of postwar human rights politics.<sup>348</sup> But while such studies have yielded much insight into the era’s political landscape, connecting the 1930s to the postwar period, less attention has been paid to the very different politics of the ecumenical movement. Although Protestants shared with Catholics an aversion to ‘secularism’, particularly in the form of communism, which threatened Europe’s spiritual and moral character, across the continent great hostility between the two confessions remained. As Udi Greenberg writes: ‘The Cold War may have helped lead Catholics to the language of human rights in the name of combatting Communism, as some have claimed, but this did not automatically necessitate increasing tolerance for other churches or accepting state neutrality in religious matters.’<sup>349</sup> While Greenberg’s analysis deals with this question from the Catholic side of the equation, the present chapter calls attention to the role of the predominantly Protestant ecumenical movement. Although, as Dianne Kirby has written in relation to the British Christian Council, ecumenists were liable to prioritize communist persecution over ‘the persecution of Christians by Christians’<sup>350</sup>, the World Council of Churches (WCC) undertook a concerted effort against Catholic intolerance as well. How

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<sup>347</sup> Quoted in Delpech, *The Oppression of Protestants*, 102-104.

<sup>348</sup> Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the European Convention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2018). Cf. Mary Ann Glendon, ‘The Influence of Catholic Social Doctrine on Human Rights’, in Roland Minnerath, Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli, and Vittorio Possenti, eds., *Catholic Social Doctrine and Human Rights* (Vatican City: The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2010) 67-82.

<sup>349</sup> Udi Greenberg, ‘Catholics, Protestants, and the Tortured Path to Religious Liberty’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79, 3 (2018) 461-479, on 464.

<sup>350</sup> Kirby, ‘Bishop George Bell’, 358.

did the WCC approach the question of religious liberty in Catholic countries? What role did the concept of human rights play in this? How did WCC-Roman Catholic relations evolve with Vatican's mid-1960s embrace of religious freedom and human rights?

The chapter takes the case of Spain as the most salient example of ecumenical engagement in this regard, owing to the dictatorial nature of the regime there and its symbolic importance for Europeans in particular and the West more generally. While a number of other countries, most notably Italy and Colombia, also were the subject of intensive ecumenical advocacy, none received more attention than Spain. Of the many crimes of the Franco regime, its violation of the religious freedom of Spanish Protestants hit especially close to home, leading Christians – above all those in majority Protestant countries – to campaign on this specific issue. Given the small size of Spain's Protestant minority – roughly 30,000 communicant members, though the total amount could be thrice that, on a population of about 30 million<sup>351</sup> – the intensity of this effort was remarkable when compared to the vast scale of religious repression in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, indicating the emotional, symbolic, and ecumenical significance of the issue.

Based on the archives of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), its Secretariat on Religious Liberty, and its Department of Inter-Church Aid, which all cooperated closely with regard to Spain, the chapter provides a chronological account focused on a set of key junctures. Its relatively extensive coverage of the source materials reflects the absence of a narrative account of these events thus far. The first section discusses the postwar period (1945-1953) and the onset of Spanish Protestant protests alongside international support. The second section addresses the period during which Spain's now-consolidated regime began to 'integrate' into the international community while continuing its religious repression, especially through the closure of the important Evangelical Seminary in Madrid. Finally, the third section highlights ecumenical involvement in the creation of Spain's 1967 Law on Religious Liberty, in the context of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty and the warming of WCC-Roman Catholic ties.

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<sup>351</sup> By the early 1980s the estimate had risen to 40,000, see WCC, *The Churches in Spain* (Geneva: WCC, 1984) 15.

## The consolidation and contesting of ‘National-Catholicism’, 1945-1953

### *Fundamental rights and legality in post-Civil War Spain*

As Julio de la Cueva has recently written, based on the work of J.M. Sánchez and Mary Vincent, Spain’s Civil War (1936-1939) could be characterized as a ‘religious war’.<sup>352</sup> Hundreds of thousands were killed, including thousands of Catholic clergymen who fell victim to the anticlericalism of revolutionary Republican factions, particularly during a wave of violence in 1936.<sup>353</sup> The Second Republic had disestablished Catholicism in 1931, nationalized Catholic property, and restricted the Church in other ways, thus laying the foundation for a backlash under Franco, who came to power through what the Catholic Church supported as a ‘crusade’. In the Republic, Protestants had faced restrictions too, but they had gained in stature from before, and so had looked on it more kindly – subsequently making them suspect in the eyes of Catholics.<sup>354</sup> From the end of the Civil War in 1939 to the consolidation of the regime by 1953, marked by the promulgation of the new 1953 Concordat with the Vatican and military agreements with the United States, the Protestant minority in Spain thus experienced severe intolerance.<sup>355</sup> This included instances of violence, such as attacks on services, which in some cases led chapels to be closed.<sup>356</sup> Through a 1941 Agreement, Franco restored the status of the 1851 Concordat between Spain and the Holy See, reestablishing Catholicism as the state religion, to the exclusion of any other public manifestations of religion (i.e. anything beyond private worship).<sup>357</sup> The regime, meanwhile, consolidated its power and invested heavily into the ideology of ‘National-Catholicism’ and ‘Catholic Unity’, making religion central to its legitimacy. Catholicism became bound up with what it meant to be Spanish, and an ‘anti-Spain’, as Mary Vincent has put it, was imagined: ‘Catholicism was simply innate, *the* religious identity of Spaniards and victory in the Civil War confirmed National-Catholicism as the natural expression of national character.’<sup>358</sup> The

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<sup>352</sup> Julio de la Cueva, ‘Violent Culture Wars: Religion and Revolution in Mexico, Russia and Spain in the Interwar Period’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53, 3 (2018) 503-523, on 516.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

<sup>354</sup> Mary Vincent, ‘Ungodly Subjects: Protestants in National-Catholic Spain, 1939-53’, *European History Quarterly*, 45, 1 (2015) 108-131, on 110.

<sup>355</sup> Juan B. Vilar, ‘Los protestantes españoles: La doble lucha por la libertad durante el primer franquismo (1939-1953)’, *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 17 (2001) 253-297.

<sup>356</sup> FCC, ‘Religious Liberty in Spain Today’, *Information Service*, 28, 35 (1949) 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>357</sup> Carmen Irizarry, *The Thirty Thousand: Modern Spain and Protestantism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966) 116.

<sup>358</sup> Vincent, ‘Ungodly Subjects’, 112.

Spanish Church around this time described Protestantism in Spain as a ‘snake’ that had entered the garden of Eden.<sup>359</sup>

The outcome of World War II led to initial steps to recognize a limited degree of religious freedom for Protestants. On 16 July 1945, against the background of the Allied victory over Spain’s ally Nazi Germany and on the day prior to the opening of the Potsdam Conference, Franco promulgated the *Fuero de los Españoles* (Charter of the Spanish People), a distinctly Spanish ‘Fundamental Law of the Realm’ that represented a variant of a bill of rights, aimed primarily at garnering international goodwill. The Potsdam Conference isolated his regime politically all the same, as did the United Nations, but the *Fuero* subsequently remained in place. The document represented an increase in tolerance towards Protestantism, but its provision on religious liberty elevated Catholicism at the expense of all other confessions: Article 6 set forth that ‘The profession and practice of the Catholic religion, which is that of the Spanish State, shall enjoy official protection.’ Only a limited freedom of conscience was allowed: ‘No one shall be disturbed because of his religious beliefs or the private practice of his worship.’ The third line of the article stressed the strictly private nature of this freedom: ‘No other outward ceremonies or demonstrations than those of the Catholic religion will be permitted.’<sup>360</sup>

The Spanish Minister of Government circulated his interpretation of Article 6 on 12 November 1945: ‘The confessions dissident from the Catholic will be able to exercise their peculiar cults in all Spanish territory, provided that these are limited to the interior of the respective temples.’<sup>361</sup> But even these rights were not protected in practice, and other *Fuero* articles constrained them. For instance, Article 16 stipulated that to open a chapel (or to move one to another building) one needed government approval, opening up an obvious and much-used way to restrict the spread of Protestantism. Moreover, the Catholic hierarchy openly resisted the notion that freedom of worship applied to Spanish Protestants, insisting that it only concerned foreign Protestants. The WCC reported that Spanish clergy inveighed against freedom of worship for Spanish Protestants by ‘radio and from the pulpit, but especially in the pastoral letters of bishops’, and that zealous ‘Catholic reviews’ had written that it was permissible to disturb Protestant services and destroy religious objects. Adhering to the doctrine of thesis-hypothesis, which held that Catholicism, where it was able to do so, had to

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<sup>359</sup> Irizarry, *Thirty Thousand*, 81.

<sup>360</sup> ‘Protestants in Spain Today: A summary of the situation of a religious minority, issued by the world council of churches, Geneva, Switzerland, May 15, 1950’, 4, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>361</sup> Quoted in ‘Spanish Evangelical Christians Appeal to General Franco and to the Civilized World’, n.d. [1948], 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA Spain 1948.

be the state's religion, to the exclusion of other religions, the Spanish hierarchy acknowledged the '*de facto*' existence of Protestantism, but refused to recognize it '*de jure*'.<sup>362</sup> (The other side of the doctrine was that where Catholics were a minority, they could tolerate not being the established religion; instead, they would demand religious liberty.) Mary Vincent has written that the WCC's 1948 Amsterdam Assembly served as a 'flashpoint' to Spanish Catholics, and anti-Protestant sentiment reached 'a groundswell' around this time. The same year, the Spanish episcopate 'produced their first collective pastoral letter since the Civil War, strikingly dedicated to "Protestant propaganda"'.<sup>363</sup> The Spanish Protestants Fernando Cabrera and Carlos Araujo protested that this vehement declaration reduced 'the element of tolerance in Art. 6' of the *Fuero* to 'a simple courtesy with regard to foreigners living in Spain'.<sup>364</sup>

Against this view, the WCC at its 1950 Central Committee meeting placed those of more liberal, ecumenically-minded Catholics, such as the French Jesuit Rouquette: 'Do we [Catholics] not seem to approve the odious aphorism ... according to which Catholicism claims liberty when it is oppressed and refuses it to others when it is itself the strongest?'<sup>365</sup> In a 1949 article for *Theological Studies*, the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray channeled criticism by European Catholic scholars and himself on the Franco regime's religious intolerance. He wrote that Father Jacques Leclercq, of the University of Louvain, thought that "'the Church will never bless a Catholic country which would apply in the service of the faith a policy parallel to that which the Soviets practice in favor of their conceptions'".<sup>366</sup> Murray also cited his fellow Jesuit Max Pribilla, who had written that "'the Church cannot demand freedom for herself in one state, as a human right, and deny it in another state, according as Catholics are in a minority or a majority (...) [Christians] should decide spiritual matters with spiritual weapons'".<sup>367</sup>

Vincent has noted, however, that the *Fuero* did help to shield Protestants to a degree. Protestants never faced the same kind of violent repression that the Republican left did, 'particularly the anarchist and communist movements'.<sup>368</sup> Vincent argues that Protestant pastors' respect for the

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<sup>362</sup> 'Protestants in Spain Today: A summary of the situation of a religious minority, issued by the world council of churches, Geneva, Switzerland, May 15, 1950', 6-8, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>363</sup> Vincent, 'Ungodly Subjects', 116.

<sup>364</sup> Fernando Cabrera and Carlos Araujo, 'Declaration Made By Spanish Protestants to General Franco', 15 February 1950, 2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.1.4.16.

<sup>365</sup> 'Protestants in Spain Today: A summary of the situation of a religious minority, issued by the world council of churches, Geneva, Switzerland, May 15, 1950', 6-8, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>366</sup> Quoted in WCC, *Meetings and Records of the Central Committee* (MRCC) 1950, 77.

<sup>367</sup> Quoted in MRCC 1950, 77.

<sup>368</sup> Vincent, 'Ungodly Subjects', 110.

letter of the law was an important element in their advocacy, as they sought to establish their credentials as loyal citizens in order to obtain reprieve from discrimination:

‘Many pastors energetically proclaimed their status as law-abiding Spanish citizens entitled to the protection of the law, a tactic that would have been simply impossible for members of the political opposition. Ministers seeking to reopen their chapels, for example, were scrupulous in their respect for legality.’<sup>369</sup>

This being said, it was the appearance that counted: according to a 1951 meeting of the International Committee for the Evangelisation of Spain (an organization discussed below), ‘the majority’ of Protestant marriages that had overcome ‘clerical or judicial awkwardness (...) were only achieved through falsified papers’.<sup>370</sup> Appealing to the *Fuero* was by no means a guarantee for fair treatment, but legal maneuvering could yield results in some cases.<sup>371</sup> Spanish Protestants also submitted a number of petitions to the Spanish government, such as in 1939, 1940, 1944, and 1950. Only the latter petition received an answer, from Franco’s Chief of the Civil House, who appended a copy of a circular by which a 23 February 1948 administrative decree had been confidentially disseminated to provincial governors.<sup>372</sup> This letter justified discrimination against Protestants with reference to the privileges accorded to Catholicism through the *Fuero* but also by pointing to ‘masonic centers of conspirators against the public order’ which had been ‘camouflaged in Protestant Chapels’ in the 1930s. This meant, the letter continued, that it had to be ‘made clear and precise beyond any shadow of doubt what are the differences between the private practice of worship by these religious bodies and respect for their consciences, and, on the other hand, the abuses and infringements which, under the shelter of tolerance, are being attempted’.<sup>373</sup> The government thus frankly showed its commitment to restricting Protestantism to the private realm.

### *Spanish Protestants and their international supporters*

Given their predicament and the lack of recourse on the domestic plane, Spanish Protestants sought outside support, of which the WCC would be an important source. The connections between Spanish Protestants and the WCC began when the latter was still in the process of formation, and

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>370</sup> ‘Meeting of the International Committee for the Evangelisation of Spain’, n.d. [April 1951], 11, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1950-1.

<sup>371</sup> See e.g. Irizarry, *Thirty Thousand*, 96-98 and 107-108.

<sup>372</sup> Delpech, *Oppression of Protestants in Spain*, 88-91, quote on 91.

<sup>373</sup> Memorandum on Spanish communication of official position on religious liberty, n.d. [1950], 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

primarily concerned with postwar reconstruction. In 1945, three Spanish Evangelical ministers travelled to the WCC-information in Geneva and met with the Department of Reconstruction. Then, at its September 1947 synod, the Evangelical Church in Spain received a representative of the WCC's General Secretary, W.A. Visser 't Hooft, who invited them to fellowship and offered assistance in training theologians, through scholarships and through funds for 'the ministry of the orphaned congregations and the spreading of Evangelical literature'. This offer allowed for the establishment of a Spanish Committee for the Reconstruction of Evangelical Work, which succeeded in opening a theological seminary on 3 November 1947.<sup>374</sup> At the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly, both the (Presbyterian) Spanish Evangelical Church and the (Anglican) Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church, which had originally been one but separated in 1880, joined the WCC (this meant that the two other major denominations present in Spain, the Baptists and the Plymouth Brethren, as well as many smaller groups, remained outside of the ecumenical fellowship).<sup>375</sup> The WCC's Department of Inter-Church Aid would come to provide over \$50,000 per year to the Spanish churches, making up a large part of their budget; the Spanish Evangelical Church in the late 1950s 'only supplied 10% of its [own] general budget apart from purely local expenses of lighting and heating, church buildings, etc.'. <sup>376</sup>

The WCC soon began raising awareness about the situation in Spain. On 15 May 1950, it published a long statement on religious freedom in Spain, detailing the history of repression from the Inquisition through Franco. The document appealed to Christian love, which began with 'genuine mutual respect' and challenged the Catholic Church: if it was so sure of its truth, why not allow it to compete freely with other convictions? After a long discussion of the recent history of religious liberty in Spain and the opposing political but above all theological viewpoints, the statement ended with a reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Quoting in full its Articles 18 and 19 (on freedom of religion and of opinion and expression, respectively), the WCC wrote that the Declaration, 'no religious but a simple social document, points out the first step in the right direction to all religious groups sure enough of the truth of their faith that they have cast out all fear'.<sup>377</sup> The statement did not mention the Amsterdam Assembly's Declaration on Religious Liberty, perhaps reflecting the hostility

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<sup>374</sup> 'Religious Liberty in Spain: Report brought to England by a recent visitor, dated November 1947', 11-12, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA Spain 1947.

<sup>375</sup> Juan Estruch, 'How Can There Be Protestants in Spain?', *The Ecumenical Review*, 20, 1 (1968) 53-62, on 53.

<sup>376</sup> Grubb to Nolde, 'Spain', 24 April 1958, enclosure, 14-15, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>377</sup> 'Protestants in Spain Today: A summary of the situation of a religious minority, issued by the world council of churches, Geneva, Switzerland, May 15, 1950', 9, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

of the Vatican towards the WCC at this time (discussed in the final section): the UN's Universal Declaration apparently seemed like a more promising way to establish common ground.

In July of the same year, the CCIA's study on 'Religious Freedom in Face of Dominant Forces' included (in its confidential section) a report on Spain and how liberalization might be achieved, from an anonymous source. The report highlighted the difficulties of affecting change, which could only be 'a slow process of patience and without clamor to try to crystallize little by little the goodwill; first of all to find it, then to use it (...) But it naturally is necessary to be very prudent.' Therefore, it was 'essential that Spanish Protestants do not mix in politics and try to be good citizens, whenever that does not go against their conscience – which allows them to have a firmer attitude when their conscience comes into play: refusal to attend mass, to be rebaptized, etc.'. But the report suggested this restrained attitude on the part of Spanish Protestants could usefully be complemented by 'international Christian action', both '[t]hrough the churches' and '[b]y political intervention', or rather the combination thereof.<sup>378</sup> This line of thinking would prove influential in the circles of the WCC throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

International connections beyond the WCC existed in the form of the International Committee for the Evangelization of Spain. The CCIA had a very close connection to the Committee: Grubb had chaired it in the mid-1930s. This Committee, composed of both Spanish Protestants and international supporters, represented 'the numerous committees in different countries which support the Spanish Evangelical Church', even though its Spanish members in particular tended to claim it represented 'the bulk of Spanish Protestantism'.<sup>379</sup> Though the International Committee's work was largely concerned with more practical matters relating to Protestantism in Spain, it also dealt with religious liberty, and it affiliated itself with the CCIA. This meant that the CCIA, Grubb in particular, was an important interlocutor in discussions on how to advocate for religious liberty. For example, in 1955, when Grubb attended the Committee's meeting in Paris, he was asked 'what the C.C.I.A. could do'; he responded that it 'could in any case only intervene if requested to do so by a "member church" or a recognized cooperative body representing the interests of member Churches in Spain itself and not interests managed on their behalf from overseas'. Grubb said this to preempt Spanish sensitivities about unwanted foreign interference. Grubb continued by saying that 'in the case of Spain both her

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<sup>378</sup> CCIA, 'Religious Freedom in Face of Dominant Forces: Part III. "Religious Domination"', July 1950, 8, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.1.4.16.

<sup>379</sup> Grubb to Rees and Nolde, 'Recent Visit to Paris', 26 April 1955, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1953-5.



national psychology and her international position made it very difficult for the C.C.I.A. to intervene effectively'. Moreover, 'the resources for further possible effective protest internally had possibly not been exhausted, and until this was the case it was a mistake to look outside'. Pressed to explain what exactly he meant, Grubb pointed to a few recent successes in civil marriage court cases and suggested that the Spanish Evangelical Church should build up 'a body of precedence and [an] argument could be built up and a wedge inserted in what seemed to be a crack in the rigidity of official practice'. Grubb reported that this 'argument greatly appealed to the Spaniards present'.<sup>380</sup> Grubb thus sought to distinguish two levels of advocacy, the national and the international, with different tactics appropriate to each. The national level was to be preferred, as long as it offered viable ways of contesting religious discrimination.

When the ecumenical movement lobbied to obtain intergovernmental action against Spain, Britain and the United States were the two states whose assistance was most often sought out, not least due to the strong connections ecumenical leaders had with the (virtually entirely Protestant) foreign policy establishments of these two countries. National ecumenical bodies played a role here. For example, Andrew Preston notes that in a 1949 press release, the Federal Council of Churches, the WCC's most important constituent body, not only warned of communist repression of religion but went on 'to castigate authoritarian anti-communist regimes in Spain, Latin America, and elsewhere for violating the religious liberty of non-Catholics, most notably Protestants'.<sup>381</sup> Such pressure helped bring about a number of diplomatic actions. For instance, on Truman's instruction, on 14 March 1951, the American Ambassador to Spain, Stanton Griffis, spoke with Franco about religious discrimination against Protestants. He pointed out that Truman would soon consider economic and military aid to Spain as part of the coming year's budget, and 'begged Franco to make a gesture such as instructing Civil Governors to respect the rights theoretically enshrined in the' *Fuero*. But Franco in response 'blamed intransigent clerics and undertook to raise the matter at the next cabinet meeting', deflecting attention from his own power, and did nothing. The conversation moved on to military relations, especially the use of Spanish bases.<sup>382</sup> This pattern did not undergo essential change except as to skew further in favor of military relations. In the context of the Cold War, anticommunism increasingly dominated American official attitudes, as the American FCC leader Walter Van Kirk found out

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<sup>380</sup> Grubb to Rees and Nolde, 'Recent Visit to Paris', 26 April 1955, 1-2, WCCA CCLIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1953-5.

<sup>381</sup> Andrew Preston, 'Peripheral Visions: American Mainline Protestants and the Global Cold War', *Cold War History*, 13, 1 (2013) 109-30, on 120.

<sup>382</sup> Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 1993) 610.

speaking to an official representing the State Department's Spain Desk. The official explained to Van Kirk that 'in Communism we are confronted with a challenge to all religion (...) What we are doing in Spain, as elsewhere, is for the preservation of the American way of life.' Van Kirk objected that religious freedom was precisely part of 'the American way of life', but to no avail.<sup>383</sup> Truman's replacement by Eisenhower, who was lukewarm about the concept of human rights, meant religious liberty became yet more marginal as an issue in US-Spanish relations. It did not stand in the way of the landmark Defense Pacts of 26 September 1953, and the conclusion of Spain's Concordat with the Vatican in 1953 cemented the hegemonic status of Catholicism in Spain.<sup>384</sup>

## The Concordat, the Evangelical Seminary, and the Evangelical Defense Commission, 1953-1965

On 27 August 1953, Spain and the Holy See signed a new Concordat, which affirmed the close connection between the Roman Catholic Church and the Franco dictatorship. Paradoxically, however, the signing of the Concordat coincided with the start of a reduction in the persecution of Protestants. Not only was the dominance of the Catholic Church fortified, the regime's consolidation meant that the fear of anti-Francoist conspiracies declined. Meanwhile, Spain sought to improve its ties with the West, especially the United States but also with Western Europe, which at this time was taking the first steps towards European integration. Vincent writes that 'after the signing of the concordat in 1953, evangelicals became less prominent in the imagined 'anti-Spain', though their presence in Spain had actually increased'.<sup>385</sup> Whereas the number of Spanish Protestants had dwindled to as few as 5,000 at the end of the Civil War, by the early 1960s estimates were up to 30,000.<sup>386</sup>

Advocates for religious liberty hoped to benefit from Spain's developing domestic and international political situation. On 14 December 1955, the country joined the United Nations. This prompted at least one Spanish periodical to crow that Spain's membership associated it with the UN Economic and Social Council's promotion of human rights without discrimination on the basis of religion or other reasons, which the British Council of Churches's Alan Keighley, returning from a

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<sup>383</sup> 'Report of Conversation between Mr. William Dunham of the Spain desk of the State Department and Walter W. Van Kirk', n.d. [May 1952], 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>384</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 618-622.

<sup>385</sup> Vincent, 'Ungodly Subjects', 126.

<sup>386</sup> Irizarry, *Thirty Thousand*, 93.

visit to Spain, reported ‘brings derisive laughter from Protestant groups in Spain’.<sup>387</sup> But Spain’s accession to the UN could be seen as generating leverage for religious freedom advocacy. A press release by the London-based Evangelical Alliance remarked that Spain had recently been admitted to the UN, ‘and presumably, has accepted the Declaration of Human Rights’.<sup>388</sup>

Intergovernmental approaches remained the most promising avenue to exert pressure. For example, in 1955, Visser ‘t Hooft and Nolde met in Geneva with the WCC’s old friend John Foster Dulles, now US Secretary of State, asking him to raise the issue of religious liberty during an upcoming meeting with Franco, in Spain, on 2 November. Dulles obliged, though the thrust of the meeting was concerned with cementing US-Spanish relations and promoting Spain’s integration into the Western bloc. Visser ‘t Hooft subsequently wrote to Dulles that his raising the issue ‘had greater effect than may have appeared at the moment’, according to ‘very reliable’ information the WCC had obtained.<sup>389</sup> The documents in the WCC’s files do not make clear what exactly this impact might have been, however.

Immediately adjacent to the correspondence with Dulles in the archives is a French-language aide-mémoire, marked ‘strictly confidential’ and annotated as ‘for nobody else’, which seems to have originated with the Spanish government or at least represented a position it took. The one-page note, which reflected a ‘verbal communication’, indicated that if it were to be made public, ‘the Government’ would ‘deny’ it. Its sensitive content was a three-point list of conditions Spanish Protestants would have to meet in order ‘to enjoy better treatment from the Government’s side’. The first of these conditions was to adhere to a strict separation of Spanish and foreign churches. The second was for foreign Protestants to observe a perfectly ‘correct attitude and international courtesy with regard to the country which welcomes them so graciously’, while Spanish Protestants should ‘show their honest and loyal *patriotism*’, though Protestant ‘churches should abstain from politics entirely’. Finally, ‘in their relations with the Roman Catholic Church, all Spanish Protestants [should] give proof, individually and collectively, of their best ecumenical spirit’.<sup>390</sup> The provenance of this remarkable note is unclear; most likely it was passed on to the WCC by a diplomat (as happened a few months later, see below).

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<sup>387</sup> Booth to Micheli, ‘Religious Liberty’, 24 October 1958, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.2.

<sup>388</sup> John Savage, ‘Spain at the End of 1955: Authentic Report from the E.A. Correspondent’, 4 January 1956, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1953-5.

<sup>389</sup> Visser ‘t Hooft to John Foster Dulles, 9 November 1955, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>390</sup> Translation mine. No author, ‘Strictelement confidentiel’, n.d. [likely (late) 1955], WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

In any case, the note reflected the Spanish government's suspicions of Protestants' political allegiances as well as its concern for its international reputation. But the fact that a Spanish government official was apparently willing to so forthrightly state a Spanish position in terms of conditions for better treatment was significant, not least because it recognized a problem that Franco publicly denied existed in the first place.

Though the WCC's records on the subject are sparse, no doubt owing to the confidentiality in which contacts were conducted, it seems clear that its associate, the former 'very distinguished and prominent' Spanish former Jesuit A.F. Carillo de Albornoz, was around this time beginning to play a role as an informal connection between the WCC and the Spanish government. Carillo had come to the Vatican in 1947 to serve as the international head of the Marian Congregations, but within two years, he had 'lost patience with Rome's hostility to the ecumenical movement' and 'jumped ship' to the WCC, where he became an adviser to Visser 't Hooft, and a specialist on religious liberty.<sup>391</sup> According to a letter by an unidentified ecumenist, in December 1955, Carillo had responded to a Spanish 'note verbale' (possibly the above-mentioned French-language document) by transmitting to the Spanish Ministers of Education and of Foreign Affairs, Ruis Jiménez and Alberto Martín Artajo, through the Spanish Embassy in Paris, a text which included a request for permission for 'the functioning of schools for the children of Protestant families and a Protestant theological Seminary purely for the education of pastors'.<sup>392</sup>

Ecumenical hopes of liberalization were dashed, however, when on 23 January 1956, the Spanish authorities closed down the Union Evangelical Seminary (*Seminario Evangélico Unido*) in Madrid. This Seminary held its classes in a building that had already been threatened with expropriation in the late 1940s: the Colegio El Porvenir, which was at the time described by the American Howard Schomer, of the WCC's Department of Inter-Church Aid, as 'a central citadel of Spanish Protestantism'.<sup>393</sup> The building was part of a set of properties in Madrid and Barcelona, including churches that served German Lutherans there, which had been established by the German Fliedner family, from 1870 onward. In 1949, the Spanish government twice announced its closure,

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<sup>391</sup> Pollard, *The Papacy*, 433.

<sup>392</sup> Translation of last quotation mine. Unidentified author to Visser 't Hooft, 4 February 1956, 2, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>393</sup> 'The Closure of the Protestant Theological Seminary in Madrid: Report of the meeting in Geneva Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1956', n.d. [February 1956], 1-2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

but international pressure (including an ecumenical campaign) had prevented this.<sup>394</sup> According to one source of the WCC's information, the 1956 closure was the result of Jesuit pressure on the Minister of Education, Jiménez.<sup>395</sup> Another possibility, however, stated more gingerly, was that it had inadvertently resulted from contacts between Carillo and Spanish government ministers. One of Carillo's contacts, in whom he had 'the greatest confidence', according to a member of the Seminary's governing body, was the Minister of Education.<sup>396</sup> The suggestion here was that Carillo's above-mentioned request to legalize the Seminary had drawn attention to a situation which had thus far been quietly tolerated. A telegram by House to Visser 't Hooft, however, reported that local 'representatives' indicated that it had been no 'Protestant indiscretion' but 'local churchleaders [sic]' who had convinced the Minister of Education to initiate the move, which had then been supported by the entire cabinet.<sup>397</sup>

The WCC took a public stance in response to the closure and sought to use Spain's recent admission to the UN as leverage. Despite CCIA skepticism of the importance of this change in Spain's international position – 'there being no U.N. machinery for remedial measures, and Spain being a new member'<sup>398</sup> – the language of UN human rights featured prominently in WCC appeals. At its February meeting in Gilbulla, Australia, the WCC Executive Committee issued a statement saying that the seminary's closure 'at the very time of Spain's entrance into the United Nations contradicts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principle of respect for the rights of religious minorities'.<sup>399</sup> The 26-27 July 1956 Vienna meeting of the WCC Executive Committee noted that the seminary was still closed. It protested this with reference to the 'principles of religious liberty as laid down in the United Nations' Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for the observance of which Spain as a member of the United Nations must accept moral responsibility'. It also expressed its conviction that 'the existence and full functioning of the Seminary are in complete accord with the rights and liberties of Spanish citizens as guaranteed by constitutional provisions'.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> See Amelia W. Wyckoff to Grubb and Visser 't Hooft, 'German Missionary Property in Madrid', 1 September 1949, and other documents in WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>395</sup> 'The Closure of the Protestant Theological Seminary in Madrid: Report of the meeting in Geneva Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1956', n.d. [February 1956], 1-2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>396</sup> Translation of last quotation mine. Unidentified author to Visser 't Hooft, 4 February 1956, 2, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>397</sup> Telegram from House to Visser 't Hooft, n.d. [early February 1956], CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>398</sup> CCIA, Minutes of the 11th meeting of the Executive Committee, Herrenalb, Germany, 22-29 July 1956, 27, WCCA CCIA 428.4.6.1.

<sup>399</sup> Quoted in Fagley to Dulles, 15 February 1956, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>400</sup> Quoted in MRCC 1956, 7.

The heads of the Spanish Evangelical Church and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church, which sponsored the Seminary, petitioned the government several times, appealing to the *Fuero* and the ‘manifest, tacit, official consent with which the said Seminary has been functioning’.<sup>401</sup> According to one of the WCC’s close associates, Spanish Protestants perceived the closure as part of ‘a full-fledged anti-Protestant campaign’, linking it to a number of other incidents. The associate also wrote that ‘[g]iven the 19<sup>th</sup> century experience which is still very much alive in the memories of the elders in Madrid, their immediate tendency has been to turn to the Foreign Embassies for protection’, a hint at the longstanding nature of the issue. Following the advice of Carillo, however, the Spanish Protestants’ international contacts advised them ‘rather to push their own Government on every possible level, for redressment [sic] of their grievances’. Thus, the Seminary’s governing body, the *Patronato*, of which the above-mentioned (unidentified) associate was a member, created a legal commission of Spanish members ‘to coordinate all negotiations [sic], petitions and eventually law-suits’.<sup>402</sup> The members of this legal commission, however, insisted that its efforts would remain ‘without practical effect, if it is not continuously supported by diplomatic and publicity action from outside the country’. As the associate reported, ‘[t]hey understood our references to the long term evil effects of appeals to Foreign Powers in such cases as that of China or Bulgaria’, yet they could not ‘surrender the old arm of directly negotiated foreign intervention’ if they could not count on ‘the serious support of the WCC and the CCIA’. According to the Spanish Evangelical Protestants, the Southern Baptists in Spain, who remained aloof from the ecumenical movement, maintained a close relationship with the American government, which exercised pressure to protect them, whereas they themselves were relatively exposed. ‘Geneva’ would thus have to do better.<sup>403</sup>

The WCC’s campaign, joined by other bodies, would arouse ‘world-wide interest’ in the issue.<sup>404</sup> Apart from its public statements, the WCC undertook approaches primarily to American and British officials, as well as to churches, while still avoiding any direct representations to the Spanish

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<sup>401</sup> M. Gutierrez Marín and Santos M. Molina Zurita, Letter to the Minister of State, 25 January 1956, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956; ‘World Council of Churches Executive Committee Protests Against Closing of Protestant Seminary in Spain’, 7 February 1956, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>402</sup> Unidentified author to Visser ‘t Hooft, 4 February 1956, 1, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956. The *Patronato* included Leslie Cooke and Grubb and met twice a year.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>404</sup> Schomer to Francis House and members of the Patronato, ‘Spanish Protestant Legal Commission Work’, 6 March 1956, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

government.<sup>405</sup> The CCIA wrote to its commissioners worldwide, asking them to ‘bring the matter before the attention of your government in the immediate future’. Grubb used the occasion of a UNESCO Board meeting in Madrid to engage a number of relevant individuals.<sup>406</sup> From a separate letter by a colleague it can be inferred that these included Sir Ben Bowen Thomas, of the British Ministry of Education, who was a member of UNESCO’s executive board. Thomas then ‘raised the matter privately with the Spanish minister of education’.<sup>407</sup> Richard Fagley wrote to Dulles on the CCIA’s behalf, quoting the Gilbulla statement’s references to the UN and human rights.<sup>408</sup> (Even before this, though, having received information about the seminary from other sources, the State Department had already undertaken a representation to the Spanish government.) Fagley also consulted with officials of the NCCCUSA, who sent ‘an independent inquiry and expression of concern to the European desk in the State Department’.<sup>409</sup> Grubb repeated the Gilbulla references to human rights and the UN in a letter to the British Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, sent in the name of the British Council of Churches, adding that ‘Spain is a member State of UNESCO which is concerned to promote human rights’.<sup>410</sup>

The diplomatic approaches that the WCC’s contacts undertook initially seemed effective. The US Ambassador to Spain, John Davis Lodge, expressed a strong interest in the matter, and he and the Swiss Minister Suter were, according to Schomer, the primary interlocutors for Spain’s Foreign Minister, Artajo. After a meeting of Spain’s cabinet, which articulated ‘the general line of a settlement acceptable to the Papal Nuncio’, Artajo told Lodge on 25 February that ‘the matter is settled’, but then told Suter that ‘the conditions for reopening the seminary would be quite simply those applied to any other institution of higher education’, which he affirmed, at Suter’s request, through a written note ‘prepared by his chef de cabinet’ two days later. Artajo also expressed to Suter ‘the desire that the latter should at once inform the World Council of his government’s favorable settlement of the Seminary

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<sup>405</sup> ‘The Closure of the Protestant Theological Seminary in Madrid: Report of the meeting in Geneva Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1956’, n.d. [February 1956], 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>406</sup> CCIA, ‘Closing of Protestant Seminary in Madrid’, 14 February 1956, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>407</sup> Eastman to G.B.G. McConnell, Esq., 27 September 1956, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>408</sup> Fagley to Dulles, 15 February 1956, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>409</sup> Fagley to Grubb, Werner Kägi, and Nolde, ‘Madrid Seminary’, 15 February 1956, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>410</sup> Grubb, ‘Union Theological Seminary Madrid’, 13 February 1956, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

problem', much to the WCC's content. Suter discussed Artajo's note with the Seminary's Theodore Fliedner, and they together proposed to amend the note to refer not to "the usual legal conditions applying to university instruction" but to "the requirements of a residence for university students". At his next meeting with Suter, Artajo 'readily accepted' this and another amendment 'and wrote them in hand on the letter which the Swiss Minister had received from his chief of cabinet'. This new formulation was, according to Schomer, not one that officially existed, in order 'to get around the insuperable obstacles which would have been created if the Seminary, a private Protestant institution, had to conform to the usual regulations applied to university instruction in this country where such instruction is always Catholic and public'. Fliedner's hope, apparently, was that the requirements for the seminar would amount to no more than 'simply those applicable to any hotel'. But the *Patronato's* legal commission became 'rather fearful of this condition' – and rightly so, as it turned out. They instead came to 'prefer to obtain from the Government a simpler statement such as "[t]he order closing the Seminary is revoked, and the Seminary is tolerated"', sidestepping the Concordat, since referencing it was likely to bring more harm than good.<sup>411</sup>

While the Spanish authorities seemed initially to back down and allow the seminary to reopen at least informally, WCC sources reported how Artajo's ostensibly sincere initiative was caught in a web of opposing forces. Canon law jurists argued that the Seminary's reopening would contravene the 1953 Concordat's provision that "all educational institutions" had to teach the Catholic religion.<sup>412</sup> Moreover, the Interior Minister, Blas Pérez González, reputedly a close affiliate of the Jesuit organization *Fé Católica*, was 'obdurate'. When Artajo then took the question back to the Spanish cabinet, on 8 June, it was decided to obtain the opinion of the Roman Catholic Church, and to transfer responsibility from Artajo to the Minister of Justice. The Church's Conference of Metropolitans 'formulated a *fully negative opinion* and transmitted it to Rome through the Nunciature in Madrid, which appended a statement of its own judgment favorable to *de facto* toleration'. This clash between the Conference and the Nunciature provided the Spanish government with an excuse to postpone taking a decision.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Schomer to Francis House and members of the Patronato, 'Spanish Protestant Legal Commission Work', 6 March 1956, 1-2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956. Suter's first name is not provided.

<sup>412</sup> Schomer to Visser 't Hooft, 'New Development regarding Madrid Seminary', 4 May 1956, 2, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>413</sup> WCC, 'The Continuing Crisis Confronting the Union Theological Seminary in Madrid: A Confidential Report to the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Vienna, July 26-27, 1956', 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain. Madrid Theological Seminary.



Meanwhile, Visser 't Hooft sought to exert influence through the Swiss foreign ministry, which he described as 'extremely helpful'. But as it became clear that the situation was not improving, he turned to the CCIA for 'heavier ammunition': the US State Department. Visser 't Hooft also felt it was time to throw caution to the wind in regard to church action: 'there is now no need to hold back any churchbodies [sic] who want to protest about the recent events in Spain. On the contrary it will be helpful to get some strong resolutions.'<sup>414</sup> Significant American pressure was apparently not forthcoming, however: Schomer reported that two days after the Spanish Foreign Minister returned from a trip to Washington DC, several new measures were applied against Spanish Protestants.<sup>415</sup> The Seminary's legal commission stressed the importance of international support, and called on '[e]cumenical and other church bodies' to 'continue to maintain that there *can be* room for a normal existence for a Protestant minority in an officially Roman Catholic state, especially when the latter is committed to the Charter of the United Nations'. It also stated that the WCC and its members 'should try to find some way to approach Rome about the Seminary, getting its support, if at all possible, for the only way out of the impasse: the guarantee of the right of the private practice of non-Catholic religions, contained in Article 6 of the 1945 "Spanish Bill of Rights", which is expressly mentioned in the appendix to the 1953 Concordat with the Holy See'. A report to the Vienna Executive Committee meeting indicated this latter suggestion might be well worth pursuing, pointing to a 1953 papal pronouncement that tolerance could "'be justified when the interest of a higher and greater good is thus served'", as interpreted by the pontiff himself.<sup>416</sup> But at a time when the Vatican adhered to a highly restrictive reading of what such a 'greater good' would mean, proposals to get the Pope to pressure Spain to change the *Fuero* remained wishful thinking.

The Seminary did not reopen, and the ecumenical campaign on its behalf died out. Though some teaching would still be carried out at El Porvenir clandestinely<sup>417</sup>, the education of Spanish clergy was also carried out elsewhere, partly in Madrid but also in Barcelona and beyond.<sup>418</sup> Support for the Seminary flagged not only because of the authorities' intransigence, but also because doubts arose

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<sup>414</sup> Schomer to Visser 't Hooft, 'New Development regarding Madrid Seminary', 4 May 1956, 3, CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>415</sup> Visser 't Hooft to Nolde, 5 May 1956, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>416</sup> WCC, 'The Continuing Crisis Confronting the Union Theological Seminary in Madrid: A Confidential Report to the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Vienna, July 26-27, 1956', 2-3, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain. Madrid Theological Seminary.

<sup>417</sup> According to the website of the still-existing Colégio El Porvenir, legal recognition was only granted in 1978. <http://www.elporvenir.es/es/historia-colegio> (accessed 30 June 2018).

<sup>418</sup> Grubb to Nolde, 'Spain', 7 May 1959, enclosure, 7, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

about the reasons why the churches associated with the Seminary did not themselves pursue its reopening more vigorously. A few years later, Grubb – who had been closely involved with the Seminary – later concluded that the campaign had ultimately been ‘a false fight, since the difficulties were not only with the government, but in the interior of the Spanish Evangelical Churches’. Grubb wrote that he had ‘always suspected’ such – indeed, he had written as much in his diary in 1957<sup>419</sup> – and wistfully asked ‘why is it that people will not listen to the experience of history and prudent advice’. Since the Seminary had closed ‘not only for legal difficulties, but because of internal difficulties’, it would ‘probably never be reopened and in my judgement never ought to be reopened again’. He was supported in this view by Schomer, who explained to Grubb that a root cause of the problem was that there had been too many pastors in relation to the only slowly expanding flock. (Grubb, ever the wisecrack, jibed that ‘a Church which was “over-pasteurised” was already on the way to being sterile!’)<sup>420</sup> In May 1960, Grubb wrote that the Seminary was ‘a dead duck, and regrettably my previous impressions were again confirmed, namely that most of the younger and abler ministers (and some of them are very able) did not really regret its passing’.<sup>421</sup> Given these assessments, there was no reason to continue waging a campaign on its behalf.

The campaign for the Seminary was consequential, however, in prompting an intensification of legal work for religious liberty, as the legal commission set up by the *Patronato* developed into a permanent Evangelical Defense Commission (Comisión de Defensa Evangélica Española). This Commission was presided over by Bishop Santos Molina, of the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church (of the Anglican Communion in Spain). It looked to its Italian counterpart, the Legal Office of the Federal Council of Evangelical Churches in Italy, headed by the Waldensian lawyer Giorgio Peyrot, as a model.<sup>422</sup> Grubb proposed that Evangelical Defense Commission be given the status of a national commission of the CCIA.<sup>423</sup> The Baptist lawyer and pastor José Cardona Gregori (mentioned above as the lawyer who in 1961 found a legal loophole that protected meetings of up to twenty Protestants) was hired as the Evangelical Defense Commission’s secretary. Cardona was appointed a

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<sup>419</sup> Grubb to Nolde, ‘Spain’, 2 May 1957, enclosure, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>420</sup> Grubb to Nolde, ‘Spain’, 24 April 1958, enclosure, 13-14, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>421</sup> Grubb to Nolde and Rees, ‘Evangelical Council for Spain’, 23 May 1960, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>422</sup> Grubb to Nolde, ‘Spain’, 7 May 1959, enclosure, 6, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>423</sup> Grubb to Nolde and Rees, ‘The Evangelical Council for Spain’, 13 May 1963, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

Commissioner of the CCIA in 1963.<sup>424</sup> By 1962, the Evangelical Defense Commission had ‘acquired direct access at a high level in ministries concerned’ with religious liberty, Grubb reported.<sup>425</sup> Cardona was also able to use his stature and relations with government officials to help others publish works that would otherwise not have received permission.<sup>426</sup> He became an important contact for the WCC; in 1962, Grubb introduced Carillo to him and the rest of the Evangelical Council, to Carillo’s gratitude, since it provided him with much-needed information about religious liberty in Spain.<sup>427</sup>

The Evangelical Defense Commission was separate from but closely linked to the International Committee for the Evangelization of Spain, which at this time became, briefly, the International Committee for Evangelization *in* Spain, before becoming the Evangelical Council for Spain. Grubb was behind this change from what he had come to realize was ‘a very bad name’.<sup>428</sup> He redrafted its constitution, and was asked to become its chairman, a role he fulfilled from 1959 to 1965 (having initially appointed him for a maximum of two years, the Council, ostensibly against Grubb’s wishes, amended its statutes to allow him to remain longer).<sup>429</sup> Grubb’s tenure was accompanied by a revival and a widening of its work: he reported that meetings were now attended by 40 or more, whereas the old Committee had been ‘dying’. Moreover, the Council widened its participation to include groups such as the ‘Plymouth Brethren and Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Pentecostals’, making it ‘the *only* forum at which all Spanish Protestant groups meet’.<sup>430</sup> At the end of his tenure, the organization was transformed into the Spanish Evangelical Council, led by the Spanish Rev. Pedro Bonet, with international representatives reduced to ‘associate members’ (observers without a vote).<sup>431</sup> The organization had thus become more Spanish than international, which the CCIA considered an accomplishment, especially given its ecumenical character. Moreover, this no doubt assuaged earlier fears that by allying itself with the Evangelical Council, the WCC would line itself ‘up in the public mind with what might be called the Protestant defence organisations’, leading it to be perceived as a

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<sup>424</sup> Nolde to Grubb, ‘Spain’, 12 June 1963, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>425</sup> Grubb to Nolde, ‘Evangelical Council for Spain’, 17 May 1962, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>426</sup> Irizarry, *Thirty Thousand*, 168.

<sup>427</sup> Grubb to Nolde, ‘Evangelical Council for Spain’, 17 May 1962, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>428</sup> Grubb to Nolde, ‘Spain’, 13 April 1956, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/CCIA. Situation of Protestants in Spain documents 1956. Closing of Seminary 1956.

<sup>429</sup> Grubb to Nolde and Rees, ‘Second Meeting of the Evangelical Council of Spain’, 30 May 1961, 2-3, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>431</sup> Grubb to CCIA New York, 12 May 1965, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

‘World Council of Protestant Churches’.<sup>432</sup> Ties between the Spanish Evangelical Council and the WCC nevertheless remained close, as during the mid-1960s the prospect dawned of fundamental reform of Spain’s laws on religious liberty.

## The Second Vatican Council, WCC-Roman Catholic Dialogue, and Spain’s Law on Religious Liberty, 1962-1967

During the 1960s, the WCC’s relations with the Roman Catholic Church entered a new era. The WCC’s early relationship with the Roman Catholic Church had been one of antagonism. Though initial efforts were made to allow Roman Catholic observers to attend the Amsterdam Assembly, the Vatican issued a decree prohibiting this (though a few Catholics observed the conference in an informal fashion). The Evanston Assembly proceeded similarly. Despite the Vatican’s hostility towards ecumenism, which was reciprocated in the form of ecumenical animosity towards Catholicism’s tendency towards ‘dominance’, some prominent Catholics had early on sought to improve relations. In 1952, the Dutch priests Frans Thijssen and Jan Willebrands founded the Catholic Conference on Ecumenical Questions (CCEQ), which served as a forum for Roman Catholic ecumenists. Willebrands established direct contact with the WCC in 1953; he would develop a lively correspondence with his fellow countryman Visser ‘t Hooft.<sup>433</sup> The 1957 Oberlin ‘North American Conference on Faith and Order’, organized by the WCC’s US Conference and co-sponsored by the American and Canadian councils of churches, was the ‘first ecumenical gathering attended by authorized Roman Catholic observers’: Yves Congar and George Tavard, both of whom would be appointed expert observers (*peritus*) at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>434</sup> In 1960, at a meeting in Milan, Visser ‘t Hooft was introduced to Cardinal Bea, who had been appointed head of the new Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. They discussed, among other things, ‘the question whether the [Second Vatican] Council should deal with the subject of religious liberty’. In the event, one of the five schemata the Secretariat prepared for the Council dealt with religious liberty, which subsequently

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<sup>432</sup> Booth to Nolde, ‘Evangelical Council for Spain’, 8 December 1959, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>433</sup> Lukas Vischer, ‘The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church’, in in Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 2: 1948-1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1970) 311-352, on 320-321.

<sup>434</sup> Lorelei Fuchs, ‘Pivotal Years: 1948-1965’, in Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartlan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* (April 2017) 6, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199600847.013.3 (accessed 6 July 2018).

developed into the Council's 1965 Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*.<sup>435</sup> The WCC's contacts with those Catholics who favored a more open attitude to the world and to other confessions thus placed it in a position to influence the mid-1960s reorientation of the Catholic Church.

In the lead-up to the adoption of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the CCIA put out a statement welcoming the progress made thus far and laying out seven requirements it hoped the Declaration would meet. Though it goes beyond the scope of this study to ascertain the influence of the WCC or CCIA on the content of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Jesuit observer Edward Duff wrote in *Religious News Service* that the Declaration 'incorporates implicitly and expands theologically the seven "requirements" of religious freedom' the CCIA's statement had elaborated. (He also wrote that the Declaration was 'vastly more fundamental in its thinking (and, hopefully, more effective in its results) than the U.N.'s Universal Declaration on Human Rights'.)<sup>436</sup> These requirements included the recognition of religious freedom as a universal 'civil freedom', the 'freedom to manifest religion or belief', 'alone or in community, and in public or private', and the 'freedom to maintain individual or collective bonds with religious communities or associations, the character of which transcends national boundaries', all of which would indeed be reflected in the Vatican's Declaration.<sup>437</sup>

As Gerard Mannion has written, the Declaration, which was promulgated on 7 December 1965, was principally authored by Cardinal Pietro Pavan, who had also drafted *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical on human rights, on which the Declaration built. It was also deeply influenced by the American Jesuit Murray. Furthermore, Jacques Maritain played a role in persuading the new Pope Paul VI of the importance of the text. *Dignitatis Humanae*, declaring that 'the human person has a right to religious freedom', affirmed that the God-given dignity of the human person meant not only that people should not be coerced into any faith but also that they should be free to practice their own religion. It thus challenged prior teaching on the superiority of the Catholic faith, on the doctrine of 'thesis-hypothesis', and on the claim that 'error has no rights'.<sup>438</sup> Significantly, it

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<sup>435</sup> Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, "'Cardinal Augustin Bea: His Contribution to the Ecumenical Movement and to Religious Liberty'", Opening Address at the Cardinal Bea Symposium', *Information Service*, 101 (1999/II-III) 70-77, on 71-72.

<sup>436</sup> Edward Duff, 'Fruit of Patient Reflection Seen in Religious Liberty Document's Scope', *Religious News Service* (1 November 1965), 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>437</sup> CCIA Executive Committee, 'Human Rights and Religious Liberty – Current Considerations', 12 July 1965, WCCA CCIA 428.4.10.

<sup>438</sup> Gerard Mannion, 'Vatican II: How the First Global Council Transformed Catholicism', in Jens Holger Schjørring, Norman A. Hjelm, and Kevin Ward., eds, *History of Global Christianity, Volume III: History of Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018) 182-218, on 206.

stated that the ‘right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right’. By articulating a radically different conception of religious freedom than that which had long been Catholic doctrine, the Declaration marked an important moment in the development of Catholic human rights discourse. Whereas in the 1940s, the Church had used the language of human rights to claim its singular privilege, as in the quotation by Ottaviani referenced above, it now asserted the universal ‘right of man to religious freedom’.<sup>439</sup>

Writing after the Declaration’s adoption, Carillo voiced disappointment over such omissions as the freedom to change one’s religion or belief ‘without consequent social, economic, and political disabilities’, as recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reiterated at the New Delhi Assembly, and noted that provisions of the declaration on society’s right to defend itself against ‘possible abuses committed on the pretext of freedom of religion’ and ‘unworthy’ forms of ‘persuasion’ allowed leeway for the state to repress efforts at proselytizing. This concern was especially relevant in relation to Spain, where the claim of ‘proselytism’ was used to clamp down on Protestant activities. Carillo also criticized the Vatican’s declaration for emphasizing certain corporate rights while omitting reference to the equivalent individual rights, in contrast to the Amsterdam statement. Yet all in all, he welcomed the declaration as a manifestation of Christianity putting its house in order, furthering its ‘moral leadership’.<sup>440</sup> This sense of progress characterized the Declaration’s reception among ecumenists more generally.

The Second Vatican Council also furthered dialogue between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, most directly through its 1964 Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (also known as *De Oecumenismo*). In 1965, with the Second Vatican Council still ongoing, a WCC-Roman Catholic Joint Working Group was established. This high-level forum for discussion served to increase the understanding between the WCC and the Vatican; its reports were sent on to the Pope and the Vatican’s Secretariat of State.<sup>441</sup> The Joint Working Group’s agenda included not only the nature of

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<sup>439</sup> ‘Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious, Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965’, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651207\\_dignitatis-humanae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html) (accessed 6 July 2018).

<sup>440</sup> Offprint of A.F. Carillo de Albornoz, ‘The Ecumenical and World Significance of the Vatican Declaration on Religious Liberty’, *The Ecumenical Review*, 18, 1 (1966) 4-6, 16-7, and 26, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.3.

<sup>441</sup> Aide-memoire Visser ‘t Hooft, Willebrands, Arrighi, 30-31 January 1966, 1, WCCA Relations with the Roman Catholic Church 4201.4.1.

ecumenism and of dialogue, but also religious freedom, proselytism, and mixed marriages.<sup>442</sup> On the question of religious freedom, in its May 1967 report, the Joint Working Group concluded that ‘though the theological justification may still differ from one church to the other, there is basic agreement on what the principle of Religious Liberty requires in practice’. Indeed, though ‘ecumenical dialogue’ on the subject had to continue, ‘there is good reason to hope that in the course of time on the basis of the agreement reached, still existing tensions may be overcome’.<sup>443</sup> Questions of religious freedom were still relevant, and a major document on ‘Common Witness and Proselytism’ referred back to the WCC’s New Delhi report on proselytism, the Vatican’s Declaration on Religious Liberty, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for articulations thereof. But the emphasis on ‘common witness’ pictured the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church as allies rather than antagonists, marking a departure from earlier exchanges.<sup>444</sup> As described further in chapter 5, the way had thus been cleared for significant cooperation between the WCC and progressive Roman Catholics on religious freedom, and later on questions pertaining to human rights more generally.

The big question that remained was how the Vatican’s embrace of religious freedom and ecumenism would affect the practice of Spain and other predominantly Catholic countries. Over the course of the late 1950s, the Spanish government had made repeated promises to improve conditions for religious liberty, but there remained a yawning gap between stated intentions and outcome. As Carillo had to admit, writing in July 1961, the situation was ‘paradoxical and contradictory’: ‘Government officials seem to have promised on several occasions to adapt the legal and administrative situation of the Spanish Protestants to the requirements of the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, to which Spain belongs’, but at the same time, ‘months and even years pass and nothing is being done to alleviate the Protestants’ situation’.<sup>445</sup> In 1962, Carillo met with the Minister of Information and Press, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, the Minister of Justice, Antonio Iturmendi Bañales, and the Foreign Minister, Fernando María Castiella y Maíz. Carillo noted that his ‘personal

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<sup>442</sup> My thanks to Jurjen Zeilstra for pointing me toward this body.

<sup>443</sup> WCC Central Committee, ‘Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Second Report’, August 1967, 10, WCCA Relations with the Roman Catholic Church 4201.4.2.

<sup>444</sup> ‘Appendix II: Common Witness and Proselytism’, *SPCU Information Service* 13 (1971/I) 18–23, on 19, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/information\\_service/pdf/information\\_service\\_14\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/information_service/pdf/information_service_14_en.pdf) (accessed 2 July 2018). Cf. Günther Gassmann, ‘Intense Activity: 1965-1990’, in Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartlan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* (April 2017) 3, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199600847.013.4 (accessed 6 July 2018).

<sup>445</sup> ‘Excerpt from “Religious Liberty from Day to Day”, by A.F. Carillo de Alborno – in the July 1961 issue of The Ecumenical Review of the World Council of Churches’, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

impression' was that Castiella and Iturmendi 'only felt the great need to justify themselves in the eyes of the World Council of Churches and Protestants abroad, and, unless I was taken in by him (which I do not believe), Fraga alone appeared to want to *do* something'.<sup>446</sup> Spain was attempting to present a new face to the West, yet the country did not undertake serious political reform.

Despite these misgivings about the Spanish ministers' intentions, they were the best hope the ecumenical movement had of effecting change, and so Carillo continued to do his best to assist and to push them. In 1959, he had reported that 'the Spanish government' saw two main obstacles to liberalization: Spanish public opinion and 'the intolerant attitude of the Spanish Roman Catholic hierarchy' (both these claims had of course been used to deflect demands for liberalization in the past). To circumvent the first of these two issues, the government had agreed, 'in principle', to develop a general law 'on the status of non-Roman Catholic minorities in Spain, without especially referring to Protestants', which would declare that everyone 'would have the same civil, social and political rights as the Roman Catholic citizens'. The Minister for Justice and Religious Affairs said that such a law would also apply to the much larger Muslim and Jewish minorities, though he admitted that this meant that 'it would be very difficult to provide for evangelisation'. (The same minister also claimed that the 'very imprudent and offensive attitude' of certain Christian "sects" impeded liberalization.) As to the second problem, since the Vatican, under the new Pope John XXIII, was more favorably disposed towards liberalization than the Spanish hierarchy, the government proposed to make the proposed law into 'a complement of the Spanish Concordat with the Holy See so that the Spanish Bishops would have nothing to say in the matter'.<sup>447</sup> The notion of using this latter tactic would continue to surface as late as 1966, raising ecumenical hopes that the forces in Spain opposed to reform could be circumvented. Yet in the end such an amendment of the Concordat was not attempted; reform instead came through civil law and amendment of the *Fuero*, as discussed below.<sup>448</sup>

Castiella, the Foreign Minister, had been a key figure in Spain's attitude to religious freedom previously and would continue to be so. A controversial figure, he had fought on the Eastern front alongside the Nazis, as part of Spain's Blue Division, winning the Iron Cross. This, and possibly his advocacy of Gibraltar's return to Spain, had led the British government to refuse him as Spanish

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<sup>446</sup> Secretariat on Religious Liberty, 'Report of Dr. Carillo's Visit to Madrid, September – October, 1962', n.d., 7, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>447</sup> Carillo to Nolde, 2 October 1959, enclosure, 1-2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain, 1947-1959/Spain 1949-1959.

<sup>448</sup> Carillo to Carleton, Nolde, Grubb, Micheli, and Hayward, 15 November 1966, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.



ambassador in 1951.<sup>449</sup> Prior to the war, he had studied law in Paris, Cambridge, Geneva, and the Hague, become a professor of international law, and served as member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.<sup>450</sup> In 1953, as the Spanish ambassador to the Holy See (1951-1957), Castiella had been responsible for negotiating the new Concordat. But as Foreign Minister from 1957 on, he led Spain's international charm offensive. Religious freedom served as a way to improve Spain's standing and to bolster, among other things, its chances of entering the European Economic Community, which it had begun to formally pursue in 1962.<sup>451</sup> Entry into the Common Market, the Spanish government hoped, would help solve the country's economic woes. To this end, Castiella consulted with the Dutch, Swiss, and West German governments, as well as the American one, on what shape new legislation on religion should take.<sup>452</sup> He also sought to renew the ten-year old treaty with the United States on military bases on more favorable terms.<sup>453</sup> According to Grubb, the visit of Eugen Gerstenmaier, the president of the German Bundestag, to Madrid in February 1964, made a particular impression on Castiella, since Gerstenmaier 'took the question up vigorously' (and also met with the Evangelical Defense Commission).<sup>454</sup> Finally, on 10 September 1964, Castiella presented a proposal on developing religious freedom for non-Catholics, which had been approved by the Church hierarchy. Yet at the cabinet meeting where it was discussed, this proposal ran into opposition from conservatives, and the outcome was that Franco did nothing.<sup>455</sup>

The key factor looming in the background was the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, and its 1965 Declaration on Religious Liberty put pressure on Spain to conform to the new doctrine. A 1966 WCC report identified Spain, however, as 'the most difficult particular case concerning the application of the Vatican Declaration'. In response to the Declaration, '[c]ivil and ecclesiastical Spanish authorities' had posited three lines of defense. First, they argued that '[a]ccording to general juridical principles, a particular law has priority over a general law', and since the Concordat was a particular law and the Vatican's Declaration a general one, the Concordat would have to be changed (which would be resisted) before the Declaration could be applied. Second, the Spanish bishops had

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<sup>449</sup> Wallace Carroll, 'Spain's NATO Role at Issue in London as Minister Arrives', *New York Times* (30 August 1959).

<sup>450</sup> 'Castiella, 69, Dies; A High Franco Aide', *New York Times* (26 November 1976).

<sup>451</sup> Emma De Angelis, 'The Political Discourse of the European Parliament, Enlargement, and the Construction of a European Identity, 1962-2004' (PhD dissertation: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011) 37.

<sup>452</sup> Birgit Aschmann, "Treue Freunde..."? *Westdeutschland und Spanien, 1945 bis 1963* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999) 439.

<sup>453</sup> Carillo, 'Visit to Spain, September 1963', September 1963, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>454</sup> Grubb, 'Visit to Spain, 28<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May', 6 May 1964, 2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>455</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 718.

argued in a collective letter that “[t]he limitations of the religious freedom should be different according to the different sociologic character of each country”, and the Declaration had (in their highly contestable view) recognized the Spanish reality “of a confessional State (sic) and of a situation of Catholic unity” (sic).<sup>456</sup> And finally, the Spanish bishops had interpreted the Vatican’s Declaration’s restriction on ‘persuasion that is (...) less fair’ to mean ‘that a Catholic State has the right to investigate each witness of the religious minorities and to prohibite [sic] or punish it if it seems to it “minus recta” (‘less fair’), referring to a phrase in the Declaration on Religious Freedom which described proselytism in these terms.<sup>457</sup>

The drafting of the new Law on Religious Liberty proceeded, however, and Carillo kept the WCC abreast of the process. On 15 November 1966, he transmitted to a group of senior WCC officials, including Grubb and Nolde, the text of the new draft of the Law on Religious Liberty, which he had acquired from Spanish government officials who were ‘very anxious to know the opinion of the ecumenical movement on this matter’.<sup>458</sup> (The confidence that Carillo enjoyed was evidenced by the fact that, in his understanding, he was shown the drafting commission’s text even before cabinet ministers who were not part of it.)<sup>459</sup> In Carillo’s analysis, which he had informally supplied to Castiella, whereas the Vatican’s Declaration had stated that a country’s having a state church should not impinge on religious liberty, ‘90% of the text of this project [the draft law] is concerned with the legal status of the non-Roman Catholic confessions’ rather than with religious freedom. It thus conflated ‘matters concerning strictly religious liberty and matters about relationships between church and state’. In Carillo’s opinion, issues of church-state relations should not be part of a bill on religious liberty. When they were so to be regulated, however, Carillo stressed, they should take account of the differences between confessions; in a ‘Christian state’, non-Roman Catholic but Christian confessions ought not to have the same ‘juridical status’ as ‘Muslim, Buddhist, or Animist religions’ (though without infringing on their religious freedom). Each such relationship between a religious community and the state should be the product of negotiations, such as the Italian state was undertaking at the time.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> These insertions of ‘(sic)’ are in the original (unlike that in the next sentence).

<sup>457</sup> Committee on Religious Liberty, ‘Ecumenical Perspectives of the Vatican Declaration on Religious Liberty’, January 1966, 15, WCCA CCIA 428.4.10.

<sup>458</sup> Carillo to Carleton, Nolde, Grubb, Micheli, and Hayward, 15 November 1966, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>459</sup> Carillo, ‘Report on Religious Liberty in Spain – September 1966’, n.d. [October 1966], 4, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>460</sup> Carillo to Carleton, Nolde, Grubb, Micheli, and Hayward, 15 November 1966, enclosure, 1-3, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

Carillo's view of a just hierarchy betrayed a commitment to Christian privilege over other religions, and Nolde objected to Carillo on this point, setting against his acceptance of hierarchy the examples of the United States and India, where 'all religions so far as I know are equal before the law and have the same status'. Moreover, Nolde argued, to accept the fact of Spain as a Catholic state would place Protestants in Spain on unequal footing from the start.<sup>461</sup> This critical attitude towards church establishment highlighted Nolde's American background (British colleagues such as Alan Booth and Grubb were more skeptical of state neutrality, describing on another occasion the 'neutral state' as "a liberal pipe-dream"<sup>462</sup>). Consultation with Cardona, however, who in turn consulted with the Evangelical Defense Commission and Spanish church leaders, made clear that Spanish Protestants agreed with Carillo's views. These were thus taken as the basis for a letter sent to the Foreign Minister, on the initiative of Visser 't Hooft, in what would be the first ever official approach by the WCC to the Spanish government.<sup>463</sup> Micheli as well as Grubb and Booth rewrote the letter to make it more diplomatically appropriate but also to stress less the Vatican's Declaration and more the WCC's own adopted positions on religious liberty. At the same time, word arrived through Carillo that Minister Castiella 'had indicated his willingness to try and take into account the points' Carillo's informal memorandum had made. This made the letter by the WCC General Secretary all the more important, since it could strengthen Castiella's hand in shepherding the law through.<sup>464</sup> Sent on 15 December 1966, the letter called attention to not only the Amsterdam but also the New Delhi statement on religious liberty.<sup>465</sup>

Reform finally came the following year, but it fell well short of what the WCC and Spanish Protestants had hoped for. In 1967, the Spanish government initiated a modification of Article 6 of the *Fuero*, which was amended with the phrase: 'The State will assume the defense of freedom of religion'. This phrase replaced an old one that had read: 'No ceremonies or external manifestations of religious faith other than Catholic shall be permitted.'<sup>466</sup> Carillo noted that this change in the *Fuero* was unusual in that it preceded any change in the Concordat, which superseded it in status. A 'formal and

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<sup>461</sup> Nolde to Carillo, 22 November 1966, 1-2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>462</sup> Grubb to Micheli, 6 June 1962, WCCA CCIA 428.13.5.2.3,

<sup>463</sup> Micheli to Grubb and Nolde, 'Spain – Draft Law on Religious Liberty', 30 November 1966, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3

<sup>464</sup> Micheli to Grubb and Nolde, 'Spain – Draft Law on Religious Liberty', 15 December 1966, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>465</sup> Blake to Castiella, 15 December 1966, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.2.2.3.

<sup>466</sup> Quoted in Almudena Rodríguez-Moya, 'High Courts Reign Supreme: The Role of Case Law in the Spanish Transition towards a Secular (Non-Denominational) State', *Revista de Derecho Político*, 78 (2010) 187-216, on 196.

express authorisation of the Pope' had enabled this move, which also served as a way of overcoming parliamentary and episcopal resistance.<sup>467</sup> While this development was hopeful, the content of the 'freedom of religion' the state was bound to defend would have to be worked out through Castiella's law.

This Law on Religious Liberty, promulgated on 1 July 1967 and entered into force on 21 July, disappointed ecumenical hopes. The law extended legal recognition to non-Catholic confessions, but these could merely register, under restrictive conditions, as 'confessional associations', rather than as churches. Just before the law was promulgated, the Evangelical Defense Commission had already protested to the Minister of Justice that this was unacceptable to Protestants, but without success. They had also noted their 'anguished disappointment' at the fact 'that the Draft Law passed by the Commission of the Cortes contains no guarantee that the State will grant the right to liberty proclaimed in the Commission of Human Rights in the United Nations, in the Catholic doctrine proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, nor in the statements of the World Council of Churches'.<sup>468</sup> This appeal to outside sources of authority reflected the increasing internationalization of the issue of Spain's treatment of Protestants. The WCC's Central Committee meeting in Heraklion in 1967 expressed the same concern, referencing the same documents.<sup>469</sup> The Vatican, Carillo reported, for its part did 'not seem satisfied with the law'.<sup>470</sup> His own analysis found many flaws in the law besides the one mentioned above, and Carillo observed that in many respects it went against the Vatican's Declaration. While the Vatican had asserted that the establishment of a state church should not impede the religious freedom of other confessions, the new Spanish law stated the reverse: "The exercise of the right to religious liberty understood according to the Catholic doctrine must be compatible in any case with the Roman Catholic confession of the Spanish State, as it is proclaimed in its fundamental laws". Furthermore, the Spanish law included language suggesting it demanded unquestioning 'obedience due to the laws' as well as privileged respect for 'the Catholic religion, which is the religion of the Spanish nation', and purposefully failed to distinguish between public order and

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<sup>467</sup> Carillo, 'Latest news on religious liberty in Spain', n.d. [1965-1966], 1-2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1956-1968.

<sup>468</sup> Comisión de Defensa Evangélica, 'Letter Addressed to the Minister of Justice of the Spanish Government with Regard to the New Law on Religious Liberty', 24 June 1967, 1, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1956-1968.

<sup>469</sup> WCC, 'Spain: Statement Adopted by the Central Committee Meeting at Heraklion, Crete, 15-26 August, 1967', WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1956-1968.

<sup>470</sup> Carillo, 'Report on the Spanish Situation Concerning Religious Liberty: (Trip to Spain, August 26<sup>th</sup> to September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967', n.d. [1967], 2-3, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

private morality. It also included a paragraph setting forth an expansive definition of proselytism, including any act which 'might imply physical or moral compulsion, threat, bribery or promise'.<sup>471</sup>

After the promulgation of the law, the Evangelical Defense Commission was reduced to restraining 'the more extreme and radical group among the Protestants', which could and did lodge 'intransigent petitions', or could take 'actions which contravene the recent law', pleading that Protestants should wait until it became clear 'in what form this law is going to be administered'. The Commission tried to influence this by meeting with the government's Ministry of Justice's Commission on Religious Liberty on 28-29 November 1967. It felt it was effective in doing so and that the Ministry showed 'good-will' even as it stressed that liberalization could not be 'too rapid'.<sup>472</sup> Spanish Protestant leaders also asked the WCC to influence the Vatican to pressure 'the Spanish authorities to follow a liberal policy with regard to both the interpretation and application of the new law'.<sup>473</sup> Carillo reported that 'the government as a whole regrets that the Parliament had substantially reduced the area of religious freedom' in the new law. Thus, Carillo reported, the Minister of Justice had 'given to the Commission created for the application of the Law the instruction to be very liberal in the interpretation of the legal provisions'. Both he and Castiella had 'privately stated that they consider this Law only as a first provisional step towards full religious liberty, and they have voiced the hope that in the not too distant future following the general political evolution of the regime, the Law could be modified in much more liberal terms'.<sup>474</sup> But more fundamental change would only become possible after Franco's demise in 1975, and after a new constitution had been adopted in 1978. In 1980, finally, a new version of the Law on Religious Liberty would be enacted which established the secularity of the Spanish state and recognized the Spanish Evangelical Church and other churches.<sup>475</sup>

The Catholic Church's mid-1960s turn towards religious freedom marked the beginning of the end of Carillo's work at the WCC, though the exact circumstances of his departure remain unclear: at the end of 1967, the Secretariat on Religious Liberty was disbanded. On the eve of his departure, however, Carillo wrote a memorandum in which he expressed his vexation at the discrepancy between

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<sup>471</sup> Carillo, 'Observations to the Spanish Law on Religious Liberty', June 1967, 2-5, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>472</sup> Grubb to Booth, 11 December 1967, 1-2, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>473</sup> Micheli to Blake, 4 October 1967, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>474</sup> Carillo, 'Report on the Spanish Situation Concerning Religious Liberty: (Trip to Spain, August 26<sup>th</sup> to September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967', n.d. [1967], 2-3, WCCA CCIA Country Files Europe/Spain 1960-1969/Spain 1960-.

<sup>475</sup> For the WCC's view shortly after, see the booklet WCC, *The Churches in Spain* (Geneva: WCC, 1984) 14ff.

the Vatican's Declaration on Religious Liberty and the Spanish Law on Religious Liberty. In his view, also stated at earlier meetings, the Spanish law had 'the character and importance of a test of the Roman Catholic sincerity concerning Religious Liberty'. After the Vatican's Declaration, 'the Spanish Law was precisely the unique occasion to show the seriousness of the Vatican's insights in this matter'. But the law being 'what it is, it has opened in the whole world an enormous "credibility gap", and has put the Roman Catholic Church in an impossible position', which it had to 'redress'. This had bearing on the WCC, too, given its rapprochement with the Roman Catholic Church, meaning that 'the Roman Catholic failure to take a clear position against the Spanish Law would be in some extent also the failure of the World Council of Churches'.<sup>476</sup>

## Conclusions

This chapter has shown how Franco Spain's discrimination against its Protestant minority led the WCC to advocate publicly and privately for religious freedom. The CCIA's ties to the American and British foreign policy establishments played a key role in lobbying those governments to undertake interventions. The language of UN human rights (and the wartime alliance) was an important element in such approaches. But the WCC was fighting an uphill battle: as a result of the onset of the Cold War, human rights and Christian Democracy had become essential and interrelated elements of the anticommunist Western bloc. The pursuit of religious freedom in the Eastern bloc, in other words, encouraged turning a blind eye to religious discrimination in Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Even among ecumenists, the fact that Franco's Spain was Christian, rather than atheist, meant it was regarded as more respectable and amenable to reform than Eastern European regimes were. But for the WCC, of course, the Spanish interpretation of religious freedom, like the general Catholic one, was fundamentally misguided. Without ensuring religious freedom for Spain's Protestants, the regime could not be legitimate and had to be subjected to constant pressure and attempts at persuasion to change its ways.

A striking feature of the story is the connections between various actors and at various levels: between different Spanish religious bodies, between Spanish Protestants and the WCC, those of the Evangelical Council in Spain (to choose one of its intermediary appellations), between the CCIA and foreign policy officials, between the WCC's leadership and Roman Catholic ecumenists, and of course

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<sup>476</sup> Carillo to Rev. Hayward, 17 October 1967, WCCA Relations with the Roman Catholic Church 4201.4.2.

between Carillo and Spanish government ministers. Another study might expand these by focusing on the relations between Spanish Protestants not in contact with the WCC and their international supporters, or those between the Vatican and the Spanish episcopate and government ministers, all of which could only be hinted at in the present study. What seems clear, though, is that references to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights most often appeared in contacts involving (the possibility of) intergovernmental action, as the campaign for the 1956 closing of the Evangelical Seminary amply shows. When it came to protests by Spanish Protestants to the Spanish government, on the other hand, international points of reference were discouraged. In this way, there existed a functional separation or division of labor between the international level (where the CCIA was most active) and the national level, though by the 1960s the border between the two had become highly porous.

Yet when it came to the question of how exactly Spain's laws should be changed, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights played a less prominent role. Here, it was ecumenical statements – the 1948 Amsterdam Declaration and the 1961 New Delhi Statement – that served as the principal basis for ecumenical advocacy. The 1965 Vatican Declaration on Religious Liberty added an important instrument to the WCC's arsenal, despite the misgivings Carillo and others had about its nature as a Catholic document and its substantive flaws, which lent themselves to abuse. These documents can be understood in part as human rights documents: while the Amsterdam Declaration did not reference human rights, its emphasis on individual rights, at the expense of corporate rights (the rights of religious communities or of churches), had resulted from the simultaneous drafting of the Universal Declaration; the New Delhi Statement had emphatically embedded the right to religious freedom in the context of related civil and political rights. The Vatican's Declaration, meanwhile, built on *Pacem in Terris*, the Vatican's landmark statement on human rights, but it also emphatically included corporate rights. All of these documents articulated a distinctly Christian conception of religious freedom, while admitting of the need for a secular or civil right to be anchored in society. They went leagues beyond the Universal Declaration's Article 18, which was brief and general, and did not include corporate rights, whereas the Spanish refusal to recognize the corporate rights of non-Catholic confessions – to recognize them as churches – was a crucial point of contention. As a secular document, moreover, the Universal Declaration could not be expected to appeal to Spain's government, episcopate, and public opinion in the way that Christian principles could. As Carillo stated during a 1961 meeting between WCC and Roman Catholic theologians, his hope was that a “bridge” could be established between ‘Christian inward freedom and the civil right to religious liberty’. Only this ‘could justify the defense of religious liberty as a specifically Christian conviction, and not as a purely humanistic claim

of the “Enlightenment””.<sup>477</sup> Thus, at stake in the discussions, debates and interventions around Spain’s new draft law was the articulation of a distinctly Christian basis for religious freedom as a human right. The development of such a basis would enable Protestant-Catholic cooperation, including the joint work in Latin America described in chapter 5.

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<sup>477</sup> Translation mine. Carillo, ‘Reunion avec des theologiens Catholiques sur des questions de liberté religieuse’, 23 May 1963, 14, WCCA Secretariat on Religious Liberty 4226.3.06.



# 4. Ecumenical antiracism and human rights: the World Council of Churches, South Africa, and the Programme to Combat Racism

‘The championship of those unjustly treated, the Christian calling to defend the weak and bear witness to those aspects of the gospel which the strong are tempted to overlook, is hard to combine with the role of mediator or reconciler, not least in the particular circumstances of this case.’<sup>478</sup> – Alan Booth on South Africa, 1964

‘Our goal is not moderation but liberation from a racist minority and government by majority rule! How can you accept anything less?’<sup>479</sup> – Bola Ige to Andrew Young, 1975

## Introduction

From early on, the ecumenical movement spoke out on questions of race and discrimination in ways that were ahead of most of Christianity. The seminal Oxford Conference on State, Church, and Society (1937) affirmed ‘[t]he right of every person, whatever his race, colour or present status, to the conditions essential for life as a person, to education, to opportunity in his vocation, recreation and social intercourse.’<sup>480</sup> Building on this, the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at a 1939 meeting stated that

‘[a]ll humans are of equal worth in the eyes of God and should be so treated in the political sphere. It follows that the ruling power should not deny essential rights to human beings on the ground of their race or class or religion or culture or any such distinguishing characteristic.’<sup>481</sup>

Following World War II, at the WCC’s founding Amsterdam Assembly, the section on international affairs concluded that

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<sup>478</sup> Booth, ‘South Africa: CCIA Staff Report, June, 1964’, 4 June 1964, 4, WCCA CCIA 428.4.9.

<sup>479</sup> Quoted in Claude E. Welch, Jr., ‘Mobilizing Morality: The World Council of Churches and Its Program to Combat Racism, 1969-1994’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23, 4 (2001) 863-910, on 899.

<sup>480</sup> Quoted in WCC, *Ecumenical Statements on Race Relations: Development of Ecumenical Thought on Race Relations 1937-1964* (Geneva: WCC, 1965) 11.

<sup>481</sup> Quoted in O. Frederick Nolde, ‘Freedom of Religion and Related Human Rights’, in *The Church and the International Disorder, Man’s Disorder and God’s Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, Vol. 4 (London: SCM Press, 1948) 143-189, on 170.

[w]e affirm that all men are equal in the sight of God and that the rights of men derive directly from their status as the children of God. (...) We are profoundly concerned by evidence from many parts of the world of flagrant violations of human rights. Both individuals and groups are subjected to persecution and discrimination on grounds of race, colour, religion, culture or political conviction.<sup>482</sup>

Moreover, it stated that '[w]ith all the resources at their disposal they [the churches] should opposed enforced segregation on grounds of race or colour, working for the progressive recognition and application of this principle in every country.'<sup>483</sup>

These pronouncements took place at the same time as the ecumenical movement developed its conception of human rights, which the Amsterdam statement reflected most directly. One might thus expect that antiracism (to use a catch-all term) was a major part of the WCC's postwar human rights engagement. This chapter, however, argues that this was not the case – antiracism and human rights proceeded as largely separate agendas until the 1960s, and when the former became a central concern of the WCC after 1968, the latter figured only in an 'auxiliary' role, borrowing a term from Barbara Keys (quoted below). Richly detailed previous accounts – especially those produced by Antti Laine and Erica Meijers – have pointed out that the late 1960s were a turning point in the history of the WCC's antiracism, which moved from pronouncements to action, especially through the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR).<sup>484</sup> Some have nevertheless sought to emphasize underlying continuities. Antti Laine has argued that though the 'emphases of the racism discussion' changed, ecumenical '[v]iews on the methods of fighting racism did not change to any great degree'. Instead, 'what did clearly change was that from the Uppsala Assembly [of 1968] onwards those views were put into practice'.<sup>485</sup> Thembeke Mufamadi has written that '[d]espite the competing views of its members, (...) the WCC was at least categorical and consistent in its denunciation of apartheid from 1948 to 1994'.<sup>486</sup> By approaching the subject from a different angle, namely the distinction between human

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<sup>482</sup> Quoted in WCC, *Ecumenical Statements*, 16.

<sup>483</sup> W.A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: The Official Report* (London: SCM Press, 1949) 94.

<sup>484</sup> Erica Meijers, *Blanke broeders – zwarte vreemden: De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, de Gereformeerde Kerken en de apartheid in Zuid-Afrika 1948-1972* [*White Brothers – Black Strangers: The Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerken and Apartheid in South Africa 1948-1972*] (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008); Sebastian Tripp, 'Das Programm zur Bekämpfung des Rassismus und die "Glokalisierung" der Kirchen', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 297-311; and Sebastian Tripp, *Fromm und politisch: christliche Anti-Apartheidsgruppen und die Transformation des westdeutschen Protestantismus 1970-1990* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015); Antti Laine, *Ecumenical Attack Against Racism: The Anti-Racist Programme of the World Council of Churches, 1968-1974* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2015); Welch, 'Mobilizing Morality'; Thembeke Doris Mufamadi, 'The World Council of Churches and its Programme to Combat Racism: The Evolution and Development of their Fight against Apartheid, 1969-1994' (PhD dissertation: University of South Africa, 2011).

<sup>485</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 36 and 351.

<sup>486</sup> Mufamadi, 'The World Council of Churches', 251.

rights and antiracism, the account presented here places greater stress on the discontinuities and tensions in the ecumenical approach towards racism.

In distinguishing between human rights and antiracism, this chapter takes its cue from the analytical distinction forcefully made by Samuel Moyn, in his argument that ‘anticolonialism wasn’t a human rights movement’, between individual human rights and collective self-determination. According to Moyn, the ‘utopia’ of anticolonial self-determination, with sovereignty in its sights, had to go into decline for the ‘minimalist utopia’ of individual human rights, which sought to curtail sovereignty, to ascend.<sup>487</sup> In a similar way, the pattern demonstrated in this chapter highlights tensions between the WCC’s liberal human rights discourse and its commitment to antiracism, which came to demand a more radical stance. At the same time, it nuances this claim by showing how the two were not merely opposed but could also be complementary. I argue that the importance to the WCC of the civil rights movement and the UN help account for this. The chapter begins by describing the WCC’s engagement with South Africa, the case that took center stage throughout the period under discussion, highlighting the relative paucity of human rights language among South African opponents of apartheid but its prevalence at the UN in the 1960s. The second section outlines the influence of the American civil rights movement on the WCC’s stance on racism, before turning to the PCR, the WCC’s flagship antiracism program.

## Rights and reconciliation in South Africa

### *The WCC’s dialogue with South African churches*

In the years after the victory of South Africa’s National Party in 1948, the government launched segregationist policies under the umbrella of ‘apartheid’, a term which, as clear-cut as it may sound in retrospect, was then still fluid and contested. The government was heavily weighted with men of the cloth – Prime Minister Malan himself included – and Christianity played a key role in justifying apartheid. It thus mattered a great deal how the South African churches responded. In the main, the Afrikaner churches, especially the most important one, the Dutch Reformed Church, supported the government, while the English-speaking churches were more critical (this was in line with conflicts over racial questions since the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, with

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<sup>487</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) ch. 3.

the English-dominated south's advocacy for integrationist policies gradually losing ground to the Afrikaner north's insistence on segregation).<sup>488</sup> As this section shows, even when they criticized apartheid, the South African churches – the WCC's members and interlocutors – tended not to refer to human rights. In fact, their reasoning was often to reject human rights in favor of conditional conceptions of rights, coupled with theological rather than secularized critiques of apartheid.

In 1949, the Christian Council of South Africa, which represented ecumenical churches and missions<sup>489</sup>, organized the Rosettenville Conference on 'The Christian Citizen in a Multi-Racial Society', in which it responded to the victory of the National Party and criticized its policy of apartheid. The conference affirmed that 'God has created all men in His image. Consequently, beyond all differences remains the essential unity.' The statement continued in a paternalistic vein, however: 'Individuals who have progressed from a primitive social structure to one more advanced should share in the responsibilities and rights of their new status.' Similarly qualified language was used with regard to the franchise, which 'should be accorded to all capable of exercising it', as was the case with 'the right to work in that sphere in which he [every man] can make the best use of his abilities for the common good'.<sup>490</sup> John de Gruchy and Steve de Gruchy euphemistically describe this as 'not very radical' and smacking 'a little of paternalism', but note that 'they were a direct attack on the unfolding policy of apartheid'.<sup>491</sup>

Similarly conditional rights language featured in conferences in Pretoria in 1953 and after, organized by the Dutch Reformed Church, which stood outside the Christian Council. At Pretoria, though, other church delegates were invited to participate. The conference's final statement's only political stance related to apartheid: 'It was generally felt that Non-Europeans have a claim to right and justice in all matters, great and small, but that there should be no talk of rights if there were not also admittance of fundamental duties.'<sup>492</sup> As De Gruchy and De Gruchy observe, elaboration on this subject of rights and duties appeared 'seldom, if ever', in Dutch Reformed Church 'pronouncements over the years'.<sup>493</sup> The Rosettenville statement shows a more critical stance towards apartheid than the Pretoria statement, but it, too, accepted the conditionality of rights, counter to the concept of

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<sup>488</sup> John de Gruchy and Steve de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa: Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1979) 51-56.

<sup>489</sup> Mufamadi, 'The World Council of Churches', 26.

<sup>490</sup> Quoted in De Gruchy and De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, 53-54.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>492</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

inalienable or natural rights, and thus failed to contest an essential tenet of apartheid and the ideology legitimating it.

Attempts at dialogue between the WCC and the South African churches on the subject of apartheid got underway when in 1950, the WCC sent the Dutch Reformed theologian Rev. J.C. Hoekendijk – whose activities in Indonesia just prior are detailed in chapter 2 – to South Africa, on an exploratory visit. His impressions provide valuable insight into the relationship between the WCC, the UN, and human rights, in relation to apartheid and the South African churches. Hoekendijk reported that ‘Reading Afrikaans theological literature one is struck by the total lack of any “Renaissance” influences. A reference to human rights, “dignity of the human personality” etc. will be considered as “an influx of liberalism”, than which it is impossible to think of a more dangerous contamination.’ In a footnote to this observation, Hoekendijk noted: ‘One of the theological leaders in Febr. 1950, after having referred to the “old humanistic slogans”: “brotherhood of man, human dignity, human rights”, etc. - stated, “this is old liberalistic, spiritless humanism. The humanist speaks a foreign language for a real Christian.”’<sup>494</sup>

Hoekendijk also noted how the WCC was often equated by South African Christians with the UN and Michael Scott (the Anglican minister who had recently testified to the UN’s Fourth Committee on behalf of the indigenous peoples of South African-occupied South West Africa). This was brought home near the end of his visit, as a member of Prime Minister Malan’s entourage warned Hoekendijk: ‘Take care that the W.C.C. will not make itself into an ecclesiastical U.N.O.’ Reflecting on his observation about the UN and Scott, Hoekendijk noted that ‘One of the tasks of a W.C.C. representative seems therefore to be to disentangle the ecumenical cause from general world politics and to speak about the *Churches*’ concern for South African race relations.’<sup>495</sup> In other words, Hoekendijk’s analysis, which was representative of the dominant viewpoint among the WCC’s leadership at the time, was that the WCC should keep its distance from efforts to use the UN to denounce South Africa. The organization stood in contrast, then, with the effort of Scott and other priests, most notably Trevor Huddleston and John Collins, who opposed apartheid during the 1950s, laying, according to Rob Skinner, the ‘moral foundations’ of (British) anti-apartheid activism.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> J.C. Hoekendijk, ‘South Africa: An Informal Travel Diary – No. 1’, 4 April 1950, 5, WCCA PCR 4223.0.02.1.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 4 and 8.

<sup>496</sup> Rob Skinner, ‘The Moral Foundations of British Anti-Apartheid Activism, 1946-1960’, *Journal of South African Studies*, 35, 2 (2009) 399-416.

A few months later, after the WCC's Central Committee in Toronto, Canada, where the situation in South Africa was discussed, Visser 't Hooft wrote that it was of vital importance that 'such questions be dealt with not in a polemical spirit, but in the manner of brotherly dialogue'. Thanks to a presentation by Ben Marais, a South African Dutch Reformed minister, Visser 't Hooft wrote, 'we were able to avoid that in Toronto extensive resolutions were adopted about the race problem (some had in fact wanted this) and that we unanimously decided to travel the road of personal contact'.<sup>497</sup> Thus, the Central Committee reaffirmed the Amsterdam Assembly's language, quoted above in the introduction, but did not build on it, while it affirmed the sending of a delegation. This delegation was to be multiracial, on the insistence of Benjamin Mays, the President of Morehouse College in Georgia and a mentor and close friend to Martin Luther King, Jr., who tangled during the meeting with Marais, after Marais, according to Mays, had stated 'that communists alone support the political movement against the Apartheid in South Africa'. Mays wanted more outspoken criticism of apartheid, but this demand was buried in a muddled discussion, during which Ernest John Bingle, an English Methodist historian, former missionary in India, and adviser to the WCC on race relations, felt that 'the voice of the Bantu peoples', which Mays had claimed to advocate, 'had been heard in ecumenical circles' already; moreover, he 'did not consider it to be the responsibility of the Central Committee to pronounce against any one member Church'.<sup>498</sup>

The most directly critical stance taken by the WCC yet in response to apartheid policies came in 1957. In that year, South African churches resisted government policy when the Native Laws Amendment Bill of 1957 threatened religious freedom by making it illegal for Africans 'to attend church services, go to schools, hospitals, clubs, or other meetings outside the native areas'. The churches protested vehemently and successfully: the provision on church services was weakened. Hudson has written that the WCC, for its part, responded to the Bill in terms of human rights: 'At the 1957 meetings of the CCIA Executive Committee and of the Central Committee, resolutions took note of the treason trials and this violation of human rights [the Native Laws Amendment Bill]'.<sup>499</sup> But while the CCIA's annual report described the Executive Committee's discussion of 'the evils of segregation and other discriminatory practices' as one concerned with 'violations of human rights', the Committee's resolution on the subject, as well as the subsequent Central Committee resolution,

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<sup>497</sup> Visser 't Hooft to G.B.A. Gerdener, 1 September 1950, 1, WCCA PCR 4223.0.02.1. The minutes of the Central Committee do not render Marais' presentation in more than outline. MRCC 1950, 27.

<sup>498</sup> MRCC 1950, 28.

<sup>499</sup> Darril Hudson, *The World Council of Churches in International Affairs* (Leighton Buzzard: The Faith Press, 1977) 81.

avoided such language in favor of more conciliatory words of ‘interest, understanding, and Christian concern’.<sup>500</sup> Moreover, it is telling that it was a racially discriminatory policy with direct implications for religious freedom that triggered this response. The CCIA’s human rights agenda remained focused on religious freedom above all.

### *Sharpeville, Cottesloe, Mindolo, and the limits of dialogue*

From 1960 on, however, the WCC’s attitude gradually became more confrontational. In the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre of that year, in which South African police shot dead 69 protesters, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Joost de Blank, urged the WCC to excommunicate the Dutch Reformed Church. According to De Gruchy and De Gruchy, this call led the WCC to initiate a December 1960 consultation in Cottesloe, a suburb of Johannesburg, in which eighty representatives of ten South African member churches met with each other and with a multiracial seven-member WCC delegation.<sup>501</sup> The consultation issued a relatively reserved denunciation of ‘unjust discrimination’, but for the Dutch Reformed Churches even this statement went much too far. After a period of controversy, and under pressure from the government, they announced their rejection of the statement adopted at Cottesloe and withdrew from the WCC, setting in motion a drift of the South African churches towards isolation.<sup>502</sup>

The consultation’s statement, adopted by the vast majority of the participants, did not refer to human rights or international actors, focusing as it did on theological dialogue about apartheid. But a few of the consultation’s discussion groups, of which there were four ongoing at a time, provided hints of the prevalent views on these subjects. One group agreed on a statement of ‘scriptural principles’ on ‘race relationships’, which ‘leaned very heavily’ on a statement produced in preparation by the Dutch Reformed Church (Cape). One of the first principles was that

‘Man was created in the image of God, and for this reason, there is no respect of persons before Him[.] As Creator God is the Father of all men, irrespective of the racial group or nation to which they belong, and for this reason all creatures are of equal worth before God’.

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<sup>500</sup> Quoted in CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1957-1958* (London and New York, 1958) 36.

<sup>501</sup> John de Gruchy, ‘Beyers Naudé: South Africa’s Bonhoeffer? Celebrating the centenary of the birth of Beyers Naudé – 1915-2015’, *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 1, 1 (2015) 79-98, on 87.

<sup>502</sup> Quoted in Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 28-29.

A footnote to this principle stated that the group agreed ‘that the egalitarian doctrines of 18<sup>th</sup> century liberalism are not of Scriptural warrant’.<sup>503</sup> Repeated references to the ‘human dignity’ of the ‘Bantu’ (Africans) thus did not mean that they could claim human rights. Insofar as they had rights nonetheless, another discussion group affirmed, these were conditional on meeting Christian civilizational criteria: ‘In proportion, as the Bantu absorb the Christian principles of civilization and as their sense of duty and responsibility develops accordingly, all rights and privileges shall be accorded them together with duties and responsibilities.’<sup>504</sup>

After Cottesloe, the worsening of relations between the WCC and the Dutch Reformed Churches and increasing pressure from both black and white South African opponents of apartheid began to shift the WCC towards a more confrontational approach. A milestone in this process was the 1964 Mindolo consultation in Northern Rhodesia, on ‘Christian Practice and Desirable Action in Social Change and Race Relations’ in Southern Africa. The consultation, organized by the WCC, the All Africa Conference of Churches, the liberal South African Institute of Race Relations, and the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Northern Rhodesia, brought together more than 50 Christian leaders, all critics of apartheid.<sup>505</sup> The South African anthropologist and activist Z.K. Matthews, a CCIA Commissioner and Africa secretary at the WCC’s Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, ‘warned that in South Africa, violence was the only option left open for blacks to resist apartheid’.<sup>506</sup> The press release at the end of the consultation, which dealt with race relations in Southern Africa at large, pointed to its discussions on fundamental rights. However, such rights featured not only with reference to the ‘full and just participation of all’ South Africans. They were also raised with the aim of easing fears among South Africa’s white population of a transition to majority rule:

‘[t]o ensure this [full and just participation of all] and to allay the fears of present dominant groups, the Consultation recommended that in plural societies the granting of equal rights and responsibilities of citizenship should be accompanied by a constitutionally guaranteed Bill of Rights entrenching the liberties of all citizens so as to ensure minorities of legal protection secured by an independent judiciary.’<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Leslie A. Hewson, *Cottesloe Consultation: The Report of the Consultation among South African Member Churches of the World Council of Churches, 7-14 December 1960 at Cottesloe, Johannesburg* (Grahamstown, 1961) 35-36.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>505</sup> Mufamadi, ‘The World Council of Churches’, 57.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>507</sup> ‘Press release: Consultation “Christian Practice and Desirable Action in Social Change and Race Relations”’, n.d. [1964], 4, WCCA PCR 4223.0.03.



Reporting on his visit to Southern Africa after the Mindolo Consultation, Dr. Thomas M. Okuma, one of the two secretaries of the WCC's Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations (along with Kitagawa), reported that '[p]erhaps the greatest preoccupation of the white populace, who are opposed to the policy of apartheid, in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa is the question of the guarantee of European rights under an African majority government'. As Okuma explained, '[t]he situation is an unhappy one for them. On the one hand, Europeans who are working for a change in the present racial practices cannot convince others of the necessity for this move unless they can present guarantees'. Yet

'[o]n the other hand, Africans question the motives of Europeans who demand guarantees, maintaining that the guarantees which Europeans desire are those which maintain their positions in the status quo. Africans say that the only possible guarantee in any form of government is a guarantee of equal rights for all races, economic, political, and social. Moreover, how can Europeans talk of guarantees when in the present situation Africans are denied these same rights?'<sup>508</sup>

The same problem was registered by the CCIA's Booth, who noted a contemporaneous Danish proposal at the UN 'that the U.N. itself might be able to offer a guarantee of human rights to minorities in South Africa', that is, to whites in a post-apartheid South Africa. He dismissed this as 'scarcely realistic', not just because the UN was not credible or acceptable as a guarantor of such rights, but also because 'at present the Afrikaaner is looking for something more than accepted human rights – he is seeking ways of preserving his whole way of life and, with the English speaking community, is anxious to preserve his high living standards and economic position'.<sup>509</sup> Thus, while rights-talk featured as part of critiques of apartheid, it was at the same time tangled up with Afrikaner desires to maintain their privileged position in South Africa.

### *The Christian Institute and Pro Veritate*

The fallout from the 1960 Cottesloe consultation spurred into action the figure who would quickly become one of the most important white South African Christian voices speaking out against apartheid: C.F. Beyers Naudé, a Dutch Reformed pastor and former missionary. In 1963, Naudé founded the ecumenical and multiracial Christian Institute, as a means of implementing the call for reconciliation between white and black endorsed by the majority of the participants at Cottesloe.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Thomas M. Okuma, 'Report on Trip to Southern Africa', n.d. [July 1964], 9-10, WCCA PCR 4223.0.03.

<sup>509</sup> Booth, 'South Africa: CCIA Staff Report, June, 1964', 4 June 1964, 3, WCCA CCIA 428.4.9.

<sup>510</sup> Erica Meijers, 'The End of the Colonial Mindset: Apartheid as a Challenge for the Protestant Churches in the Netherlands', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 313-333, on 322.

This led his church to strip him of his pastorate. Naudé also began publishing the associated newsletter *Pro Veritate*, and he worked closely with the South African Council of Churches, which had its offices in the same building. Naudé regularly drew comparisons between South Africa and Nazi Germany: in their version of the *Kirchenstreit*, the South African church should model itself on Germany's 'Confessing Church', which had resisted the regime's demand of fealty. It was fitting, in this respect, that on a 1973 visit to South Africa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer Eberhard Bethge said that Naudé was 'South Africa's Bonhoeffer'.<sup>511</sup> In pleading for a 'Confessing Church' in *Pro Veritate*, Naudé called on the churches to embrace a 'witness of the recognition of the image of God in every man regardless of his class or color, and of the practice of neighborly love, charity, and justice in all human and societal relations'.<sup>512</sup>

In the issues of *Pro Veritate* that were available for this study, the concept of human rights only surfaces sporadically, usually in reporting on international ecumenical activities, and without further comment.<sup>513</sup> A possible reason for this was the publication's need to dissociate itself from accusations of 'liberalism'. A 1965 editorial made clear how great this need was. In response to critics who alleged that *Pro Veritate* was 'liberal', the editors shot back that anyone 'who wishes to exalt himself and his human freedom above the truth or the authority of God's Word is regarded by us as a liberal'.<sup>514</sup> In line with *Pro Veritate*'s mission of engaging in theologically-grounded dialogue, this clearly made it difficult to speak secular human rights language. But did the members of the Christian Institute desire to do so in the first place?

Though only a more in-depth study of its relation to human rights could answer this question in full, the only sustained discussion of human rights in *Pro Veritate* in the late 1960s suggests they had serious reservations, at the very least. This discussion resulted from a long piece by Naudé's colleague at the Christian Institute, Dr. W. Bruckner de Villiers, who wrote a regular section in the periodical. In his 15 November 1965 contribution, entitled "'Human Rights" and Christian Responsibility', De Villiers associated human rights with the era of mass politics, referring to Adolf Hitler as one of the 'arch-apostles' of the 'errant doctrine' that 'the greatest lie, if it is repeated often and convincingly

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<sup>511</sup> De Gruchy, 'Beyers Naudé', 87.

<sup>512</sup> C.F. Beyers Naudé, 'Die Tyd vir 'n "Belydende Kerk" Is Daar', *Pro Veritate*, 4, 3 (15 July 1965) 6. The work by Murray Hermanus Coetzee, *Die "Kritiese Stem" teen apartheidsteologie in die Ned Geref Kerk (1905-1974): 'n analise van bydraes van Ben Marais en Beyers Naudé* (Wellington: Bybel-Media, 2010), could unfortunately not be obtained for the present study.

<sup>513</sup> E.g. 'International standard urged to guarantee religious liberty', *Pro Veritate*, 4, 5 (15 September 1965) 16. I was able to consult volumes 4-8 (15 May 1965 – 15 September 1969).

<sup>514</sup> Editorial, 'Please Define!', *Pro Veritate*, 4, 5 (15 September 1965) 5.

enough, will persuade the masses to accept it'. De Villiers wrote that '[o]ne such slogan, repeated ad nauseam, and which has probably exerted the greatest and most corrosive influence on the thinking as well as the actual historical events of our times, is *that* [sic] regarding the supposedly sacrosanct inviolability of so-called "human rights"'.<sup>515</sup> Reading the extended invective that De Villiers unleashed at the concept of human rights, one might have been tempted to think that the piece was a sly satire of hardline Dutch Reformed support for apartheid, intended to support human rights while evading censorship. But De Villiers' article did not stop here; instead, it turned to a discussion of why man's fall from grace had stripped him of any rights that his creation in the image of God had conferred onto him. Thus, rather than joining in 'mass screams' for human rights, Christians should heed the call to 'responsibility' to God and 'love' for one's neighbor.<sup>516</sup>

Responses included that of the American Rev. Leonard Verduin, who at the time was visiting South Africa, and who took umbrage at De Villiers' dismissal of America and its Bill of Rights. Verduin marshalled Scriptural passages to show what he felt was the incontrovertible basis for the American conviction that 'all men have been endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights'.<sup>517</sup> Another critic, writing under the pseudonym of Thomas Didymus, asked De Villiers if his critique of human rights meant he condoned tyranny, while he provocatively quoted Rousseau's accusation that "True Christians are made to be slaves! They know it, and care little, for, in their eyes, this brief life counts for nothing."<sup>518</sup> De Villiers responded that man's sinful state 'does not at the same time mean that no divine norms or creaturely responsibilities apply to us any longer', because norms of 'right and wrong, good and evil, better and worse' were 'universally revealed *divine* norms'. De Villiers had thus intended his article not as a defense of 'baseless tyranny', but rather as an attack on one of its many forms, 'that of the greedy and power-hungry proletarian mass, which seeks to impose its bigoted will upon all and sundry almost solely on the strength of the hollow slogan of "human rights" instead of upon really valid grounds'.<sup>519</sup> Though De Villiers was probably exceptional in the vehemence with which he rejected human rights, the fact that he could put forward and defend his opinion in this way in the

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<sup>515</sup> W. Bruckner de Villiers, "'Menseregte" en Christenverantwoordelijkheid', *Pro Veritate*, 4, 7 (15 November 1965) 8-10, on 8.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>517</sup> Leonard Verduin, 'An American Protest Against Article on Human Rights', *Pro Veritate*, 5, 1 (15 May 1966) 13-14, on 14.

<sup>518</sup> Thomas Didymus, 'Dr. De Villiers Questioned About Article on Human Rights', *Pro Veritate*, 5, 8 (15 December 1966) 14.

<sup>519</sup> W. Bruckner de Villiers, 'Dr. De Villiers Replies', *Pro Veritate*, 5, 8 (15 December 1966) 14.

pages of *Pro Veritate* suggests that the Christian Institute was hardly to be counted among the ardent supporters of human rights at this time.

Perhaps the most important action undertaken by South Africa's ecumenical Christians was the 1968 publication of the SACC's 'Message to the People of South Africa'. De Gruchy and De Gruchy suggest that it was the 1966 WCC's Geneva conference that spurred Naudé and Bishop Burnett to initiate consultations and establish a theological commission which produced this six-page document.<sup>520</sup> The 'Message' denounced separate development as in conflict with 'the Christian Gospel, which offers salvation, both social and individual, through faith in Christ alone'. The SACC argued that to insist on the importance of 'racial characteristics' meant 'to reject our own humanity as well as the humanity of the other man'. At the same time, it distinguished the gospel, which 'declares that God is love', from "sentimental humanism". Its rejection of separate development was extensively argued, but purely on theological grounds. The SACC called on South Africans to 'be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to be committed to Christ alone!'<sup>521</sup> The reference to the accusation of 'sentimental humanism', one in line with the South African vilification of 'liberalism', seems to have been directed at secular languages such as that of human rights.

This is not to say that human rights language was entirely absent among Christian progressives at this time, as shown by the example of Peter Randall, the assistant director of the South African Institute for Race Relations. In 1968, Randall gave a lecture on human rights to the Institute, apparently in relation to the UN International Year of Human Rights. In the lecture, he introduced the Universal Declaration and, strikingly, argued that human rights were at the heart of Christian ethics. Drawing on South African precedents such as the ANC's 1955 Freedom Charter and the interdenominational 1956 Bloemfontein conference, which had spoken out in favor of multiracialism, Randall expressed his ultimate hope for a Universal Court of Human Rights (modelled on the European Court of Human Rights). He focused heavily on civil and political rather than social and economic rights, and on the importance of political power rather than a redistribution of power more generally.<sup>522</sup>

Randall came to play an important role in the Christian Institute's activities when, in order to relate the 1968 SACC 'Message' to the churches, it initiated a study project and then an action-oriented program, the Study Project on Christianity in an Apartheid Society (Spro-cas) I (1968-1972) and II

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<sup>520</sup> De Gruchy and De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, 115-118.

<sup>521</sup> SACC, 'A Message to the People of South Africa', June 1968, 2-5, WCCA PCR 4223.1.02.

<sup>522</sup> Peter Randall, *Human Rights and the Human Spirit* (Johannesburg: South African Institute for Race Relations, 1968).

(1972-1973). Randall was picked to lead this endeavor. As described by De Gruchy and De Gruchy, Spro-cas I ‘was an attempt by the SACC and the Christian Institute to work out alternatives to apartheid in South African society’. Spro-cas II ‘shifted to action and implementation’, and the Christian Institute ‘rapidly attempted to become more clearly involved in the struggle of blacks who had rejected any co-operation with the system of separate development’, and ‘was beginning to offer a radical critique of the economic structures of South African society’. According to Peter Walshe, this meant ‘a parting of company with “the old liberal illusion that change could be effected solely by education and moral appeals directed at the privileged”’. Instead the Christian Institute now “began to encourage the resurgence of black consciousness as a source of renewed dignity and potential for the poor”’.<sup>523</sup> A reading of the final report of Spro-cas, entitled *A Taste of Power* (1973), bears this out. Leslie Anne Hadfield has aptly summarized it as follows:

‘Randall wrote that South Africa needed radical change: black people should share political power, workers should have the right to join trade unions, there should be a redistribution of land, wealth, and income, greater access to social security and education, and an overhaul of the educational system. He also predicted that black people would initiate these changes. They had begun to “taste of power” and whites could not indefinitely prevent them from enjoying the full meal.’<sup>524</sup>

By the time of Spro-cas’ final report, then, Randall seemed to have traded in his faith in a liberal conception of human rights for a much more radical vision of a transfer of power from white to black, which did not engage with human rights.

Both the Christian Institute and the South African Institute for Race Relations, though multiracial, struggled to establish legitimacy among black South Africans. A 1964 visit report by the WCC’s Dr. Thomas Okuma noted that

‘Africans tend to look at multi-racial organizations [like the two Institutes] with a jaundiced eye. The principal reason is that these organizations are European led [sic] and oriented. In their present structures multi-racial institutions cannot speak for Africans, and I was reminded by politically active Africans that their influence is nil among the African population.’<sup>525</sup>

Among black South Africans, support for human rights was also limited. Saul Dubow has argued that the ANC, the most important representative of the South African liberation movement, had turned

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<sup>523</sup> De Gruchy and De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, 106-109. The quotations from Walshe are from: Peter Walshe, ‘Church versus State in South Africa: The Christian Institute and the Resurgence of African Nationalism’, *Journal of Church and State*, 19, 3 (1977) 457-479, on 462.

<sup>524</sup> Leslie Anne Hadfield, ‘Restoring Human Dignity and Building Self-Reliance: Youth, Women, and Churches and Black Consciousness Community Development, South Africa, 1969-1977’ (PhD dissertation: University of Michigan, 2010) 88. For the report itself, see Peter Randall, *A Taste of Power: The Final, Co-ordinated Spro-cas Report* (Johannesburg: The Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, 1973).

<sup>525</sup> Thomas M. Okuma, ‘Report on Trip to Southern Africa’, n.d. [July 1964], 9, WCCA PCR 4223.0.03.

towards rights language during the 1940s and early 1950s, in the wake of the Atlantic Charter's expression of the hope that 'after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny (...) all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want'. But this commitment was gradually replaced by other means of fighting apartheid, so that 'it was only in the mid-1980s that the organization's active engagement with rights revived'. As Dubow puts it provocatively, 'if there was one issue uniting Afrikaner and African nationalisms through most of the second half of the twentieth century, and throughout the Cold War, it was a mutual suspicion of liberal ideology and of individual-based human rights'.<sup>526</sup> Thus, the overarching conclusion that arises from this section is that among the WCC's allies and contacts in the South Africa of the 1960s, there was little appetite for the concept of human rights. Human rights featured primarily as a language of international support, spoken by actors in the orbit of the United Nations.

### *Apartheid, racism, and human rights at the UN in the mid-1960s*

At the UN, South Africa had become the object of human rights politics even before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was articulated (many have noted the irony of Prime Minister Jan Smuts' role in inserting human rights into the UN Charter in the first place). But the CCIA in the 1940s and 1950s did not usually cast issues of 'race relations' in terms of human rights. While its reports initially mentioned the subject under the broad rubric of 'human rights and religious liberty', in 1953 the WCC's General Secretary, W.A. Visser 't Hooft, proposed it be reported on separately.<sup>527</sup> Issues like apartheid in South Africa and the ongoing tensions in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland could instead be discussed under the heading of 'Situations involving Group Relations'.<sup>528</sup> This reflected a widespread framing among Western churches of these situations as matters of 'race relations' or 'racial and ethnic tensions', a view that was supplanted by a focus on 'racism' only over the course of the 1960s.<sup>529</sup> Moreover, the desire to preserve ecumenical dialogue with South Africa meant that the CCIA did little in response to UN denunciations. Thus, the CCIA consistently reported that it 'reserved its position with respect to specific U.N. resolutions or political devices for ameliorating conditions'. The CCIA's rationale for this was that '[t]his attitude seems advisable in order

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<sup>526</sup> Saul Dubow, *South Africa's Struggle for Human Rights* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012) 14.

<sup>527</sup> CCIA, Minutes of the Eighth meeting of the Executive Committee at the Château de Bossey, Geneva, Switzerland, 9 – 12 August 1953, 3, WCCA CCIA 428.4.5.

<sup>528</sup> CCIA, Minutes of the 13th meeting of the Executive Committee, Nyborg, Denmark, 15-19 August 1958, 15-16, WCCA CCIA 428.4.6.3.

<sup>529</sup> Meijers, *Blanke broeders – zwarte vreemden*, and Meijers, 'End of the Colonial Mindset'.

not to jeopardize action under way within the Christian fellowship'.<sup>530</sup> As an overview of its work from 1948 to 1966 acknowledged, 'Racial and ethnic tensions have not figured very much in the C.C.I.A. business during the first two decades'.<sup>531</sup>

The UN in the 1960s promulgated several major declarations and instruments to fight racism, but the CCIA provided these only with general support. When the UN adopted its 1963 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the CCIA reported that '[w]ithout commitment to detailed provisions, C.C.I.A. officers generally supported the objectives sought by the declaration and have continued to encourage all other efforts which are indispensable to the attainment of full racial equality.' The 1963 Declaration set in motion the process of drafting a convention on the same issue. The CCIA welcomed this prospect, but not without reservations: 'While debates on this subject can hardly be expected to remain without political or anti-colonial overtones, C.C.I.A. officers are keeping U.N. delegates informed' of WCC positions and ecumenical church efforts 'to renounce all forms of segregation or discrimination and to work for their abolition within their own life and within society'.<sup>532</sup> In 1965, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was adopted, an achievement in which small states from the global South had played a key role, as recently described by Steven L.B. Jensen.<sup>533</sup> But again, while the CCIA monitored the process with interest and reported that its representatives had 'generally supported the objectives sought by the declaration', they did not commit to specific provisions, suggesting a largely passive role.<sup>534</sup>

The CCIA did not see much scope for itself to act, because it understood the issues at hand as ones of 'communal tensions':

'the limits of useful external influence are soon reached in all such communal tensions, while it remains emphatically true that the world community, itself multi-racial, cannot dissociate itself from the struggle for racial justice in any country'.<sup>535</sup>

The continued understanding of these issues as pertaining to relations within 'communities' that needed to work through these problems internally militated against interventions in terms of human

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<sup>530</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1957-1958* (London and New York, 1958) 36-37.

<sup>531</sup> Richard M. Fagley, 'The first twenty years in outline: a brief review of CCIA 1946-1966', n.d. [1966], 12, WCCA CCIA 428.4.10. See also Ans J. van der Bent, *Christian Response in a World of Crisis: A brief history of the WCC's Committee of the Churches on International Affairs* (Geneva: WCC, 1986) 30-31.

<sup>532</sup> Quoted in CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1962-1963* (London and New York, 1963) 39-40.

<sup>533</sup> Steven L.B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>534</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1962-1963* (London and New York, 1963) 39.

<sup>535</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1966-1967* (London and New York, 1967) 39.

rights, which would have involved identifying victims and perpetrators, or (in the language of later years) oppressed and oppressors. In the view of the CCIA, this would upend the necessary process of dialogue and reconciliation and was more likely to exacerbate conflict rather than to solve it.

The increasingly dramatic and widely disseminated politics of American civil rights (discussed further in the next section) and South African apartheid challenged this view. On 12 June 1963, Fagley wrote to O. Frederick Nolde and Kenneth G. Grubb, the CCIA's director and chairman, respectively, that the 'pell-mell proliferation of ferments for racial justice in the U.S., stimulated in part by rapid emancipation in Africa, suggests a lacuna in our C.C.I.A. submission' to a conference at the time.<sup>536</sup> On 21 June 1963, Fagley wrote to his two colleagues again, about his being 'impressed by the rapidity with which the bubbling cauldron of racial tensions in the U.S. is beginning to boil', which was leading 'international interest' to grow 'by leaps and bounds – for better or worse'. In light of the 'emerging international conscience against racial injustice', it seemed to Fagley

'that our present posture is inadequate. We quote ecumenical statements condemning racial discrimination and refer to representation at the church level. Do we not need to see a common mind on the degree to which we recognize racial injustice as a legitimate international concern, relating the ecumenical statements to international affairs?'<sup>537</sup>

Shortly after, the CCIA Executive Committee meeting at Rochester, New York, from 19 to 22 August 1963, took up such concerns in its statement on 'International aspects of racial and ethnic tensions' (drafted by Grubb). This led the WCC Central Committee immediately after to issue a three-part statement on 'Racial and Ethnic Tensions'. The second part of this statement included a phrase which focused attention on rights, though no connection was made to international human rights provisions:

'[All Christians] must urge the government of the Republic [of South Africa] to re-establish contact with the African, Coloured, and Indian Communities; to lose no time in reversing the political trend; in securing full political, civil and economic rights for all members of these communities, particularly for those in urban areas, and to restore justice to all.'<sup>538</sup>

In October 1963, after the Rochester Central Committee meeting, the CCIA's officers 'decided to give a high degree of priority to' South Africa.<sup>539</sup> Subsequently, at its meeting at Geneva, 19-22 June 1964, the CCIA Executive Committee stated that in South Africa, CCIA officers were to

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<sup>536</sup> Fagley to Grubb and Nolde, 12 June 1963, WCCA CCIA 428.11.6.

<sup>537</sup> Fagley to Grubb and Nolde, 'International Aspects of Race, Continued', 21 June 1963, 1, WCCA CCIA Subject Files/Race Relations/WCC Documents, Corresp. 1961-69, Race Relations, Correspondence 1961-69.

<sup>538</sup> Quoted in CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1963-1964* (London and New York, 1964) 44.

<sup>539</sup> Booth, 'South Africa: CCIA Staff Report, June, 1964', 4 June 1964, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.4.9.



'Encourage and support such international actions, particularly through the U.N. or consonant with the U.N. Charter as are necessary to create conditions in which all men have equal rights, equal participation in government, and equal economic opportunity in South Africa.'<sup>540</sup>

Thus, the mid-1960s represented a moment in which human rights came to play a gradually more significant role in the CCIA's approach to South Africa. As the next section shows, however, when, at the end of the decade, the WCC pivoted towards supporting the ANC and other liberation organizations, the nascent connection between antiracism and human rights in its work at the UN played at most an auxiliary role.

## Civil rights and the Programme to Combat Racism

### *Civil rights, human rights, and the WCC*

The relationship between civil rights and human rights is an issue of ongoing scholarly contention. Many scholars have observed that while the rise of human rights in the 1940s raised hopes among civil rights activists and was seen by some as a way to connect their domestic to their international (anticolonialist) concerns, this hope did not survive in the long run. The significance of the connection in the first place, its longevity, and its legacy remain open to question.<sup>541</sup> Barbara Keys has provided a nuanced account of this question, arguing that in the 1950s and 1960s 'human rights were a familiar component of the discourse of civil rights', functioning not as its core or a more advanced version of it but as 'an auxiliary of civil rights, invoked in the natural law tradition of the rights of man'. By contrast, from 1973 on, human rights 'began to conjure up not the rights of Americans guaranteed by domestic law but the rights of foreigners as delineated in UN documents'.<sup>542</sup>

The most clearly internationalist embrace of human rights, as Moyn has pointed out, was Malcolm X's turn to the concept in the months before his assassination.<sup>543</sup> Peniel Joseph has described

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<sup>540</sup> CCIA, *The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1964-1965* (London and New York, 1965) 41.

<sup>541</sup> Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 2000); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Mark Philip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 124; Eric Arnesen, 'The Challenges of Black Internationalism: A. Philip Randolph and Anticolonial Politics in a Turbulent World' (forthcoming); cf. John Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: The African-American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Nicholas Grant, *Winning Our Freedoms Together: African Americans and Apartheid, 1945-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Sarah Azaransky, *This Worldwide Struggle: Religion and the International Roots of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>542</sup> Barbara Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 34.

<sup>543</sup> Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 105.

Malcolm X's statement, delivered after his break with the Nation of Islam and in an attempt to reach out to civil rights leaders, at the New York Park-Sheraton Hotel, on 12 March 1964. Malcolm X 'predicted that the year 1964 threatened to be "an explosive one", and he was determined to actively engage in what he called a human rights struggle'.<sup>544</sup> This was followed by his five-month tour of Africa, after which he gave his 'The Ballot or the Bullet' speech in Cleveland, Detroit, and elsewhere. 'Braiding an analysis of self-defense, electoral politics, and Pan-Africanism with an assertion that America's civil rights struggles were part of a global movement', Joseph writes, Malcolm told his audiences that "'We need to expand the civil rights struggle to a higher level – the level of human rights'".<sup>545</sup> Malcolm X created the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), which remained as small as a few hundred members, but which issued a press release during his trip to Africa, where he attended a meeting in Cairo of the Organization of African Unity, transmitting a similar message as his speech had. 'Our problem is your problem (...) It is not a Negro problem, nor an American problem. (...) This is a world problem; a problem for humanity. It is not a problem of civil rights, but a problem of humanity'.<sup>546</sup> But though it was rhetorically powerful, Malcolm's connection of Pan-Africanism to human rights seems to have remained the exception. As Moshik Temkin has argued, he was by this point an outsider to the civil rights movement.<sup>547</sup>

More representative of the civil rights movement than Malcolm X's statements were those of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. According to Thomas F. Jackson, King, a democratic socialist at heart, was driven to the language of human rights by his desire to emphasize the global nature of the struggle against racism and the wish to strike more broad-based alliances, especially with labor unions. Moreover, King faced the problem that demands for economic justice could not be phrased in the language of civil rights, because the American constitution, at which such appeals were directed, provided only for the right to property, not to work or related socioeconomic rights. Thus, King proclaimed in 1965, 'It is not a constitutional right that men have jobs, but it is a human right'.<sup>548</sup> While

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<sup>544</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006) 97-98.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>546</sup> Quoted in ibid., 112.

<sup>547</sup> Moshik Temkin, 'From Black Revolution to "Radical Humanism": Malcolm X between Biography and International History', *Humanity*, 3, 2 (2012) 267-288, on 279.

<sup>548</sup> Quoted in Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 5.

different views exist on how to date King's shift towards human rights, it is clear that in the final years of his life, he gravitated in this direction.<sup>549</sup>

The American National Council of Churches (NCC), meanwhile, the WCC's biggest constituent, had connected antiracism to human rights in the 1940s (when it was still the Federal Council). It included social and economic rights in its conception of human rights. As Gene Zubovich has argued, a December 1948 NCC conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, attempted to 'apply international norms to the institution of segregation'. One of the key figures behind the final statement the meeting was produced was Fagley, who would go on to serve as a core staff member of the CCIA. Fagley and a colleague drew on the Universal Declaration as well as the WCC's statement at Amsterdam. They put forward two categories of rights: those that were long-established in American society, and those, namely 'social, economic, and cultural rights', which 'were new and needed special effort to become established'. Doing so was imperative in relation to segregation, which was incompatible with these rights.<sup>550</sup> This emphasis on the inclusion of social, economic, and cultural rights, either survived into the early 1960s or it was revived at this time (as further research will have to show). A 1963 NCC policy statement on human rights, timed to coincide with the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, included a range of 'economic rights', including the right to 'obtain employment solely on the basis of ability and character' and the right to 'receive equal pay for equal work'. The 'pronouncement' also included a set of 'social and cultural rights', including the right to 'receive equal service from businesses and persons serving the public'.<sup>551</sup> Over the course of the 1960s, though, the NCC's human rights agenda became less concerned with domestic matters and more with international affairs. Jill K. Gill has argued that by 1968, the year of King's death, the NCC's position on human rights was focused on international issues, such as discrimination in Southern Africa and religious freedom in Eastern Europe. Its opposition to the Vietnam War and its 'new focus on heeding the voices of the oppressed (...) set the entire Council on a human rights course that emphasized systemic economic and political empowerment for the poor and marginalized' worldwide.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Cf. Darryl D. Roberts, 'An Examination of the Impact of the Climate of Religious Freedom during the Civil Rights Movement on the Pursuit of Civil Rights and Religious Liberty' (PhD dissertation: Emory University, 2014) 166.

<sup>550</sup> Gene Zubovich, 'The Global Gospel: Protestant Internationalism and American Liberalism, 1940-1960' (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2015) 123. More research on the national level will have to establish the variance between different countries in this respect. It seems likely that the American churches were outliers in their connecting human rights to racism, given the specificity of the American racial situation.

<sup>551</sup> NCC General Assembly, 'Human Rights', 8 December 1963, 3, Archives of the NCC, Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) NCC RG6/Box 20/Folder 15.

<sup>552</sup> Jill K. Gill, *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011) 364.

As the largest constituent of the WCC and an important contributor of personnel, the NCC's influence in pushing the ecumenical movement to a stronger stance on racism cannot be underestimated. This was especially so since the WCC's new General Secretary from 1966, the Presbyterian Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, had previously served as a leader of the National Council of Churches. In 1963, he had participated in the March on Washington, and he was insistent that the WCC should make racism a central concern.<sup>553</sup> Rev. Andrew Young, who would be appointed one of the PCR's first commissioners, had been a close associate of King's and had served as executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (he would go on to become US Ambassador to the UN under the Carter administration). WCC staff member Rena Karefa-Smart, who would lead staff efforts to drum up support for a strong stance on racism at the Uppsala Assembly and played a leading role in the PCR, was the first black woman graduate from Yale Divinity School and would go on to become a professor at Howard University. One of the PCR's secretaries, Rev. Charles Spivey, came from a civil rights background (Baldwin Sjollema, the head of the PCR, identified his perspective as one of Black Power<sup>554</sup>). And though not part of the PCR, the CCIA's secretary, Dwain C. Epps, had first been 'conscienticized' by his encounter with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi in the early 1960s.<sup>555</sup> Awareness of the civil rights movement and racism in the US context, which at the time had the attention of a worldwide audience, thus served as a common frame of reference for the WCC's discussions on race.

Chroniclers of the WCC's antiracism have emphasized the importance of the stance it took at its 1954 Assembly in Evanston, Illinois, where President Eisenhower welcomed the delegates to the United States. A few months earlier, the American Supreme Court had arrived at its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, a victory against segregation in public schools, energizing the civil rights movement. Moreover, in the preceding years the South African government had gradually implemented apartheid policies, leading to international outcry. The civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid movement came together at Evanston, perhaps most dramatically in the speech by Mays, in which he refuted South African justifications for apartheid.<sup>556</sup> The Evanston Assembly declared 'its conviction that any form of segregation based on race, colour, or ethnic origin is contrary to the gospel, and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the

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<sup>553</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 5.

<sup>554</sup> Baldwin Sjollema, *Never Bow to Racism: A Personal Account of the Ecumenical Struggle* (Geneva: WCC, 2015) 92.

<sup>555</sup> Epps, interview with the author, 22 July 2016.

<sup>556</sup> Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015) 197.

Church of Christ.<sup>557</sup> While, according to Laine, these intonations were chiefly directed at the church itself, the Assembly also spurred the churches to undertake action against discriminatory laws, including laws against racial or ethnic intermarriage.<sup>558</sup>

The WCC itself did not spring into action after Evanston, however. Only in 1960 did it establish its Secretariat on Race and Ethnic Relation, which carried out studies and co-organized the 1964 Mindolo consultation. But the fact that its work was not so much as mentioned at the 1968 Uppsala Assembly suggests it was of limited significance.<sup>559</sup> The WCC's deliberations in the following years produced a steady trickle of statements reaffirming what had been said at Evanston and building on it, but only near the end of the 1960s did the critical mass accrue for it to undertake more decisive action. The continued impulse of the American civil rights movement was essential to this. In 1966, Martin Luther King addressed the WCC's Conference on Church and Society in Geneva through a recorded message (race riots in Chicago had prevented him from attending). The sermon he gave was 'A Knock at Midnight', which included a strong reference South African apartheid and to the 'frustrating midnight of economic deprivation'. King called on the churches to bring closer 'that brighter day when all of God's children will live together as brothers and every man will respect the dignity and the worth of human personality'.<sup>560</sup> In response, the WCC sent him a message of solidarity, which included reference to human rights: 'we earnestly pray that in the United States the challenge to fulfil the pledges of human rights and dignity may be met'.<sup>561</sup>

King visited the WCC in 1967 and was invited to give a keynote speech at the 1968 Uppsala Assembly. Following King's assassination, the African-American author James Baldwin took his place. Baldwin addressed the hundreds of delegates as 'one of God's creatures whom the Church has most betrayed', urging the audience to take a stern look at their role in the continued existence of racism, and received a standing ovation. Baldwin's co-speaker, the British Lord Caradon, though more 'measured' in his approach, 'called for action and international collaboration as "vain gestures and sweeping declarations will solve nothing"'.<sup>562</sup> The Assembly did not have time for a fully-developed

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<sup>557</sup> WCC, *Ecumenical Statements*, 21.

<sup>558</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 25.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>560</sup> Martin Luther King, 'Sermon given at the St. Pierre Cathedral in Geneva (empty pulpit)', 17 July 1966, WCCA MCW-66-048.

<sup>561</sup> Quoted in Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, "'Der Christ fürchtet den Umbruch nicht". Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Spannungsfeld von Dekolonisierung, Entwestlichung und Politisierung', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 21-74, on 48.

<sup>562</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 47.

response to these calls, but concerted lobbying by a group of staff members organized by Blake ensured that the Assembly provided a strong mandate for a consultation to work out what a church program against racism might look like.<sup>563</sup>

The Assembly did, however, issue reports which dealt with racism, and which connected it to human rights. It stated that ‘Christians and churches everywhere’ should ‘recognize, support and share the individual and collective interests of people who are disadvantaged by their race and ethnic origin, so that they may gain the basic human, political and economic rights enjoyed by the others in a pluralistic society’.<sup>564</sup> In its section on international affairs, the Assembly’s report proclaimed that ‘[c]ontemporary racism robs all human rights of their meaning and is an imminent danger to peace. (...) Racism is a blatant denial of the Christian faith.’<sup>565</sup> In a symbolically important move, the Uppsala Assembly elected the Anglican Bishop Zulu, the first black bishop of the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa, as a president of the WCC (though South Africa refused to issue him a visa to attend).<sup>566</sup>

Nolde’s speech on human rights, in the context of the UN International Year of Human Rights, touched on racism, in stating that the Assembly offered ‘a signal opportunity for the consideration of specific problems, such as racism, in the context of the broader issues of human rights’.<sup>567</sup> Speaking after Nolde, Dr. Robert K.A. Gardiner, the executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, tied the need to overcome racism and the legacies of colonialism to human rights. The specific policy recommendations under the heading of ‘human rights’ that came out of the Uppsala Assembly, however, were still very much focused on developing the UN’s international human rights instruments: advocating for ratification and national application of the UN Covenants, pushing forward the Draft International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Religious Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, and promoting the appointment of a high-level UN official tasked with coordinating action in the field of human rights.<sup>568</sup> The CCIA’s report at Uppsala on its work relating to ‘human rights and religious liberty’ likewise

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<sup>563</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 50-51.

<sup>564</sup> Quoted in Norman Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress: A Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement, 1961-71* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) 54.

<sup>565</sup> Norman Goodall, ed., *Uppsala Speaks: Reports of the Sections* (2<sup>nd</sup>, revised edn.; Geneva: WCC, 1968) 65.

<sup>566</sup> Ian Macqueen, ‘Ecumenism and the Global Anti-Apartheid Struggle: The World Council of Churches’ Special Fund in South Africa and Botswana, 1970-75’, *Historia*, 62, 2 (2017) 87-111, on 97.

<sup>567</sup> Quoted in Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 145.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-187.

remained strongly focused on the UN.<sup>569</sup> Thus, though the WCC's human rights and antiracism agendas were clearly converging in terms of rhetoric, they were not yet integrated in practice. The less UN-centric, more radical trajectory of the PCR would ensure this emergent entanglement remained of limited significance.

### *The creation of the PCR*

Whereas previously the WCC had limited itself to issuing statements denouncing racism, the PCR initiated a number of more concrete activities. These ranged from studies and awareness-raising (mostly in the West) to direct material support to liberation movements (mostly in Southern Africa). This latter aspect was by far its most visible and controversial one, as the PCR set out to provide highly symbolic grants to organizations combating racism, most notably black liberation movements in Southern Africa. Furthermore, the PCR represented a milestone in that it drew attention to the international connections supporting South African apartheid and campaigned for divestment and sanctions (this and its grants are discussed in greater detail in the next section). Thus, the PCR did not only call for international scrutiny of apartheid, but it also initiated direct support for liberation movements and sought to weaken Southern African regimes.

In a 1983 overview of the human rights policy of the WCC, its Executive Secretary, Erich Weingärtner, noted that the PCR had made relatively little use of the language of human rights. Nevertheless, to Weingärtner's mind, the PCR's work undoubtedly fell within the ambit of human rights:

‘The problem of racism is, of course, a problem of human rights. But because of the persistent tendency to regard human rights only in its liberal individualist guise, human rights *language* was not accentuated in the PCR. The emphasis was to move beyond the liberty of individuals to the liberation of peoples.’<sup>570</sup>

Katharina Kunter has written that ‘It seems as if the fight against racism at this time [1969] wasn't seen as a struggle against the violation of individual's [sic] human rights. (...) The PCR therefore

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., 219-220.

<sup>570</sup> Erich Weingärtner, *Human Rights on the Ecumenical Agenda: Report and Assessment* (Geneva: WCC, 1983) 13. Cf. Christian Albers, ‘Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte im Kontext von Kaltem Krieg und Dekolonisierung’, in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 189-215 and 192.

perhaps also marked an ideological turn for the WCC, where the fight for social justice became more important than engag[e]ment for human rights in liberal understanding.<sup>571</sup>

The most important step in developing the PCR was the 1969 Notting Hill consultation, chaired by US Senator and Methodist layman George McGovern. This consultation took up the task, bequeathed by the Uppsala Assembly, to articulate the foundations for a dedicated program against racism. The assassination by parcel bomb of Eduardo Mondlane, the leader of Mozambique's liberation movement FRELIMO, who had been due to speak at the gathering, loomed over the gathering (Mondlane had previously spoken at the WCC's 1966 conference on Church and Society).<sup>572</sup> The six-day consultation, held in west London, was at times chaotic. One meeting was disrupted by members of the far-right National Front. Near the end of the consultation, an American delegation of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee interrupted the proceedings, reading out a 'Declaration of Revolution', which echoed James Forman's 'Black Manifesto' in demanding the churches pay reparations. The consultation, which had the liberty and the drive to be more radical than the more staid Uppsala Assembly, called upon the churches

'to move beyond charity, grants and traditional programming to relevant and sacrificial action leading to new relationships of dignity and justice among all men, and to become agents for the radical reconstruction of society. There can be no justice in our world without a transfer of economic resources to undergird the redistribution of political power and to make cultural self-determination meaningful.'<sup>573</sup>

These lines indicated the thrust of the WCC's new approach to antiracism, to which human rights were only auxiliary. At the Notting Hill consultation, a number of contributions, including that of the ANC's president, Oliver Tambo, and the position paper of the NCC, referenced human rights, but such uses were overshadowed by more structural and collective emphases. The consultation's report only used the phrase to say that the CCIA was to work through the UN, and 'churches should urge their governments to act upon international conventions', specifically the 'U.N. Declaration on Human Rights' and the ICERD. A separate one-paragraph resolution welcomed the ICERD and called for its ratification and implementation, but this was followed by a much longer and forceful section calling for the churches to 'make a serious and negotiated response to the demand of

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<sup>571</sup> Katharina Kunter, 'Not only in the Shadows of the Cold War: Africa, Socialism and European Christianity', in Katharina Kunter and Jens Holger Schjørring, eds., *Changing Relations between Churches in Europe and Africa: The Internationalization of Christianity and Politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008) 109-118, on 114.

<sup>572</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 81.

<sup>573</sup> Quoted in Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress*, 55.



reparation[s]', a subject the consultation gave far more serious attention to.<sup>574</sup> A statement by Epps to the UN Division on Human Rights in 1973 showed that the CCIA would soon become impatient with the UN's emphasis on 'standard-setting', since it had thus far failed to find 'ways effectively to implement its many already existing resolutions and conventions condemning racial discrimination and *apartheid*'.<sup>575</sup>

The grants disbursed by the PCR's Special Fund totaled \$4,188,000 between 1970 and 1980, half of which went to Africa, and most of the rest to Europe and North America.<sup>576</sup> The grants were disbursed on the basis of a principle of equality: while intended for humanitarian and educational purposes, the WCC would not audit how the money was spent. A number of the organizations in question, such as the ANC in South Africa, had rejected nonviolence as insufficiently effective. In response, the South African Prime Minister John Vorster charged that the churches were 'subsidizing murder in the name of God'. This resonated with many Western Christians, who were deeply troubled by the idea that they were abetting violence against fellow Christians.<sup>577</sup> Many were also sensitive to the concern that liberation movements were Marxist and received aid from the Soviet bloc. The Programme thus became the most controversial initiative in the WCC's history – to some, like the Central Committee's chairman, M.M. Thomas, it was a breakthrough in the Council's work, but to others it was a bridge too far.<sup>578</sup>

The PCR's Special Fund triggered intensive discussions on the Christian attitude to violence. The Addis Ababa meeting's report captured some of the ambivalence in the WCC's stance, in stating that 'the WCC does not and cannot identify itself completely with any political movement, nor does it pass judgement on those victims of racism who are driven to violence as the only way left for them to redress grievances and to open the way for a new and more just social order'.<sup>579</sup> Laine has analyzed this aspect of the PCR in detail, noting that as early as the 1964 Mindolo consultation, participants considered violence as a potential last resort, though under strict conditions.<sup>580</sup> At the 1970 Arnoldshain meeting of the PCR's International Advisory Council, which set out policy priorities for

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<sup>574</sup> WCC, 'Report on the World Council of Churches Sponsored Consultation on Racism Held in Notting Hill, London, May 19-24, 1969 to the Central Committee Meeting in August 1969', 1969, 23 and 25, WCCA PCR 4223.1.03.

<sup>575</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1970-1973* (Geneva: WCC, 1974) 157.

<sup>576</sup> Welch, 'Mobilizing Morality', 900.

<sup>577</sup> Quoted in Darril Hudson, 'The World Council of Churches and Racism in Southern Africa', *International Journal*, 34, 3 (1979) 475-500, quote on 481.

<sup>578</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 7.

<sup>579</sup> Quoted in PCR, 'Minutes of the Sixth Commission Meeting, Cartigny (Geneva), Switzerland, March 2-6, 1975', appendix VIII, 4, WCCA PCR 4223.2.03.

<sup>580</sup> Laine, *Ecumenical Attack*, 32-33.

the program, it was accepted that in some cases, victims of racism had no choice but to resist it in ways that broke the law. While funds disbursed by the Special Fund would not in any way be controlled, applicants did have to give ‘their assurance that should they receive funds they would not be used for purchasing military equipment but only for humanitarian purposes’.<sup>581</sup> Partly due to poor communication on the PCR’s part and partly due to church apprehension at the Special Fund’s implications, this was the beginning of a years-long controversy, as the PCR persisted in carrying out what it felt was the mandate it had been given by the churches, while criticized by those who felt the Special Fund went too far.

Although human rights language cropped up in attempts to defend the PCR against its critics<sup>582</sup>, there remained the ‘persistent tendency’ in the WCC to conceive of human rights in a gradualist and liberal manner, focused on religious freedom and related civil and political rights, as mentioned by Weingärtner (himself a proponent of the capacious conception of human rights developed during the 1970s). In an apparent response to this ‘tendency’, at the next Central Committee meeting, in West Berlin in 1974, the PCR attempted to clarify the relationship between racism and human rights. However, its contribution, which is worth quoting in full, was in a curiously defensive key:

‘We agree with many that the question of racism has always been considered as a violation of Human Rights. Racial discrimination gravely distorts human relationships; institutionalised racism perpetuates injustice and endangers peace between peoples. Racism is one of many forms of discrimination, such as discrimination on grounds of sex, age, creed, national origin, all of which can lead to the denial of basic human rights.

However, it must be understood that for the victims of racism it would be a blurring of the issue to widen the scope of the programme so much that the particular focus on racism is lost. Therefore, we would reaffirm that the emphasis on racism as a particular denial of human rights should remain essential to and central in the Programme to Combat Racism.’<sup>583</sup>

Though the PCR’s text did not specify to which suggestion it was responding, this seemed like a rejection of the idea that the PCR should be widened to the entire gamut of discrimination, under the banner of human rights, rather than only racism. It is not clear from the official documents that this proposal was in fact put forward by its critics, but the fact that the PCR felt compelled to preempt it shows that its staff perceived a tension between antiracism and human rights. Human rights could be used, they feared, as a way of diluting the PCR’s focus.

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>582</sup> E.g. Albert van den Heuvel to Ben Marais, 22 October 1970, 1-2, WCCA PCR 4223.3.03.

<sup>583</sup> Quoted in PCR, ‘Minutes of the Sixth Commission Meeting, Cartigny (Geneva), Switzerland, March 2-6, 1975’, appendix VIII, 2, WCCA PCR 4223.2.03.

The PCR's view of human rights as a potential curb on its ambition also showed in its report to the Nairobi Assembly of 1975. This included the trenchant lines that

[t]he PCR has no choice between merely demanding standards of minimum treatment or identifying the causes of racism and combatting them. The latter course was the only one possible. It was the right decision if only for the reason that the oppressors wrongly claim that human rights can be donated by the powerful to the powerless.<sup>584</sup>

This formulation was clearly a critique of an approach to human rights that limited itself to demanding of the South African regime that it respect the human rights of the nonwhite population, especially if human rights meant mere 'standards of minimum treatment'. Such an approach simply did not provide the prospect of fundamental change, in the PCR's view, and smacked of the very paternalism the program set out to break with. It did not signal a rejection of human rights as such, and in this it was consistent with the 1974 report's acknowledgment that racism was, in a broad sense, a question of human rights. Thus, it left open the possibility that the ecumenical conception of human rights could itself be transformed into something sufficiently ambitious. Such a process was, of course, ongoing at the time, and the Nairobi Assembly's section on international affairs wove together human rights and antiracism more closely than ever before.<sup>585</sup> To the extent that the Nairobi Assembly's conception of human rights – discussed in chapter 6 – also entailed an emphasis on direct support to emancipatory movements, it moved towards reconciling the PCR's Special Fund with human rights.

## Conclusions

Despite the ecumenical movement's early pronouncements on race, the connection between antiracism and human rights was anything but self-evident. Though the early WCC's statements were analogous to the UN's provisions against discrimination, they did not develop into a significant part of the WCC's human rights agenda until the 1960s. 'Race relations' were understood to be a separate issue from human rights – which was then principally to do with religious freedom and associated liberties – which called for dialogue, so that those practicing racial discrimination might be persuaded to see the error of their ways. During the 1940s and 1950s, the interlocutors of the WCC in South Africa were primarily white churches, though the ecumenical movement did press, successfully, for multiracial contacts.

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<sup>584</sup> 'From Uppsala to Nairobi: The Programme to Combat Racism', n.d. [1975], WCCA PCR 4223.2.02.

<sup>585</sup> David Enderton Johnson, ed., *Uppsala to Nairobi, 1968-1975: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (New York and London: Friendship Press and SPCK, 1975) 160.

It took the mobilization of the American civil rights movement and the violence inflicted on them, as well as on South African protesters, by intransigent white supremacists, to start shifting the WCC to a more confrontational posture. The close link between the CCIA and the UN, where increasingly ambitious measures against racism were being developed, likewise spurred the ecumenical movement to action. The CCIA's engagement with human rights, and its supranational position, invited it to begin crafting a policy that deployed human rights language in the cause of antiracism. But the CCIA remained committed to its liberal human rights idiom, focused on nondiscrimination and civil and political rights, whereas antiracism, especially in a case like the struggle against apartheid, was growing into something more radical.

Thus, there was only a weak connection between the WCC's human rights agenda from 1948 to 1968 and its establishment of the Programme to Combat Racism in 1969. The discussions leading up to the PCR's creation were dominated by concern for structural, especially economic, factors. Its willingness to effectively condone violence distinguished it sharply from the nonviolence associated with both human and civil rights. Moreover, the established focus of the WCC – and especially its constituency – on liberal rights led the PCR to regard those advocating for anti-apartheid in terms of human rights with suspicion. Only to the extent that, in the 1970s, the WCC was able to redefine human rights to be compatible with support for collective struggles for liberation could the PCR's work be fully understood as a human rights program. To the extent that human rights remained associated with demands for 'standards of minimum treatment' instead, it could only serve as an auxiliary. While the PCR's stress on supporting emancipatory organizations stimulated the WCC to apply similar approaches elsewhere, it was the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America, above all, that would lead it to develop a conception of human rights that combined individual and collective rights.

# 5. Human rights as a language of liberation: the ecumenical response to military dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s

“There is then a twofold violation of human rights in the Third World, the violation of the rights of the masses, who comprise the societies of the poor nations, and the violation of the rights of those who struggle for those rights to be respected.”<sup>586</sup> – Julio de Santa Ana, no date [early 1973]

“Taking the old language of human rights, so frequently and rightly criticized for being a liberal facade for ignominious behaviour in too many cases, we sought to give it a new content.”<sup>587</sup> – Dwain C. Epps, 1973

## Introduction

Opposition to the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America served as the crucible in which ecumenical human rights engagement underwent a fundamental and multifaceted transformation during the 1970s. Violence in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and above all Chile, among other countries, galvanized a worldwide response during these years, generating an intricate transnational network that deployed the language of human rights.<sup>588</sup> The World Council of Churches (WCC) was a key component of this transnational network, which included many Christian actors. Its longstanding commitment to human rights in its earlier guise, focused on religious freedom, no doubt helped to enable this response, and Latin American countries, especially Colombia, had received the attention of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and the International Missionary Council (IMC) from the 1940s. Moreover, the establishment of the colonels’ regime in Greece in 1967 had prompted sustained ecumenical engagement in terms of civil and political human rights, as part of an international campaign that foreshadowed the rise of human rights in the 1970s.<sup>589</sup> But the

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<sup>586</sup> Julio de Santa Ana, ‘The Human Rights Issue from a Third World Perspective’, n.d. [early 1973], 4, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>587</sup> Epps to Giorgio Fillibeck, 8 June 1973, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2.

<sup>588</sup> For an excellent recent interpretation, see Patrick William Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies: Latin America and the Making of Global Human Rights Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>589</sup> On Greece, see Barbara Keys, ‘Anti-Torture Politics: Amnesty International, the Greek Junta, and the Origins of the Human Rights “Boom” in the United States’, in Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 201-223; Effie G.H. Pedaliu, ‘Human Rights and International Security: The International Community and the Greek Dictators’, *International History Review*, 38,

repression that intensified across Latin America during the 1970s provoked a far more extensive and lasting ecumenical response, one that would exert a formative – if contested – influence on ecumenical thinking about human rights.

As Patrick William Kelly has noted, the literature on human rights in Latin America in the 1970s has hitherto been largely national in frame, a situation which he sets out to rectify as he analyzes how activists used ‘this new moral and political vocabulary [of human rights] to challenge prevailing notions of state sovereignty and social activism, blurring the borders of the nation-state to endow an individual with a set of rights protected by international law’.<sup>590</sup> While Kelly includes the WCC, which he rightly identifies as an ‘underappreciated actor’, in his analysis, it is only as one organization among several, including Amnesty International.<sup>591</sup> While this chapter deals with some of the same events as his narrative, it places these more fully in the context of the ecumenical movement and its approach to human rights. In particular, it considers in greater depth the relationship between civil and political rights on one hand and social, economic, and collective rights on the other. These two sets of rights correlate to what Kelly has distinguished, following Samuel Moyn, as ‘depoliticized’ human rights activism and ‘overt political paradigms’, specifically Marxist anti-imperialism, which adopted human rights language instrumentally: ‘Where Amnesty saw human rights as an ideology that rose above politics, solidarity activists saw it as a means to a political end.’<sup>592</sup> I argue that even though the general trend of Latin American human rights activism was towards a narrow, depoliticized focus on civil and political rights, especially torture, the WCC and some of its contacts were determined not to let what they understood as the structural root causes of political repression disappear from view. The inflection of their perspective by Marxism, anti-imperialism, and most of all liberation theology ensured this.

The chapter proceeds in three parts, the first of which presents a discussion of the development of liberation theology and its uneasy relationship with human rights. The second part traces the WCC and its interlocutors’ engagement with human rights in Brazil and Uruguay – a country which Kelly’s analysis omits – as well as through regional contacts, which shows nascent attempts at

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5 (2016) 1014-1039; and forthcoming work by Konstantina Maragkou, including a monograph, provisionally titled *From Tragedy to Triumph: The Greek Colonels’ Regime and the Human Rights Revolution*.

<sup>590</sup> Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 3.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 67. See also Patrick William Kelly, ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Transnational Christian Activism, Human Rights, and State Violence in Brazil and Chile in the 1970s’, in Alexander Wilde, ed., *Religious Responses to Violence: Human Rights in Latin America Past and Present* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016) 95-122.

<sup>592</sup> Patrick William Kelly, ‘The 1973 Chilean Coup and the Origins of Transnational Human Rights Activism’, *Journal of Global History*, 8, 1 (2013) 165-186, quote on 167-168.

using human rights to counter repression while keeping in view more structural issues. The third and largest section discusses the ecumenical network's response to the establishment of the junta in Chile, leading to the creation of the Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America (HRROLA).

## Liberation theology and human rights

Annegreth Schilling's recent work has spotlighted the period of 1955 to 1975 as a time when Latin American Protestantism in the ecumenical movement experienced a 'boom'. Whereas even in the early twentieth century, Latin America 'was not only seen as a Catholic but was also defined as a "neglected continent"', by the 1960s Latin American Protestantism became enmeshed in 'political theories such as Christian socialism and dependency theory', 'growing international solidarity in the political field', and efforts at 'developing a contextual Protestant theology from Latin America'.<sup>593</sup> This latter undertaking was connected to the rise of Latin American liberation theology, which – against the background of a long history of Catholic Church entanglement with imperial rule and landowning elites – sought to recover 'the church itself from its historical complicity in colonial and capitalist oppression'.<sup>594</sup> Though Latin American Protestantism was, according to Schilling, perceived very differently, namely 'as an emancipatory movement, and as a precursor of modernity, particularly through attitudes to education, representative democracy, and economic liberalism', Protestant theologians were 'often on the same track' as Catholics, especially 'in their theological reasoning'.<sup>595</sup> While liberation theology had roots in the 1950s, it was after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that it gained steam. The Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, organized by the Latin American Episcopal Council, held in Medellín in 1968, is usually seen as the decisive moment in this respect: the documents produced here reflected on the application of the Second Vatican Council to Latin America, and gave a major impetus to the spread of liberation theology in the region.<sup>596</sup>

As Schilling writes, the WCC's primary point of contact in the region was the network Church and Society in Latin America (*Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina*, ISAL), which was founded in 1961,

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<sup>593</sup> Annegreth Schilling, 'Between Context and Conflict: The 'Boom' of Latin American Protestantism in the Ecumenical Movement (1955-75)', *Journal of Global History*, 13, 2 (2018) 274-293, on 279-281.

<sup>594</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions & British Imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990) 24-25.

<sup>595</sup> Schilling, 'Between Context and Conflict', 279 and 281.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

building on an older Latin American Christian student movement and youth organization.<sup>597</sup> ISAL's goal was to bring together Latin American churches to address the challenges facing the continent in the social, political, and economic realms, and to represent a Latin American voice in the international ecumenical movement. Its most important activities were social and educational projects as well as publishing an eponymous bulletin and the journal *Cristianismo y Sociedad*. The movement included figures such as the Argentinian theologian José Míguez Bonino (who would serve as one of the WCC's presidents from 1975 to 1983), the Brazilian Reformed theologian Rubem Alves, and was led during its first seven years by the Argentinian Methodist layman Luis Odell. Theologically, it drew inspiration first from Karl Barth and later more from Dietrich Bonhoeffer – intellectual connections that linked it to European theology, which it took in new directions.<sup>598</sup> Based in Montevideo, Uruguay, the organization was criticized by some for focusing on and representing too much the more European-oriented countries of the Southern Cone.<sup>599</sup> It was composed largely of young male intellectuals (theologians as well as laymen) of radical leftist political orientation, who were critical of the more reserved political attitude of most Latin American churches. Staff relations between ISAL and the WCC were tight, in no small part due to the exiling of many members as authoritarian rule intensified in Uruguay and Argentina. ISAL's general secretaries between 1968 and 1975 (when repression forced it to end its activities) were Leopoldo Niilus, Julio de Santa Ana, and Oscar Bolioli. Santa Ana would become study secretary of the WCC's recently founded Commission for the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD) from 1972 on, and Bolioli had already worked at the WCC, as the executive secretary of the WCC's Youth Department from 1968 to 1972. Niilus became the new Director of the CCIA. In addition, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose conception of 'conscientization' is discussed further below, upon his exile worked for the WCC's education department and exerted a widespread intellectual influence. It is therefore no surprise that, according to Daniel Salinas, 'in Latin America the two [ISAL and the WCC] were seen as one'.<sup>600</sup>

ISAL representatives played an important role in challenging the WCC's established focus on the 'responsible society', as exemplified by the Brazilian-American missionary Richard Shaull's intervention at the 1966 Church and Society conference in Geneva. Shaull challenged the WCC to embrace the need for 'revolution', which he applied to the relationship between the West and the

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 281-282.

<sup>598</sup> Annegreth Schilling, *Revolution, Exil und Befreiung: Der Boom des lateinamerikanischen Protestantismus in der internationalen Ökumene in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) 93-95.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 109-110.

<sup>600</sup> Daniel Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical Theology in the 1970s: The Golden Decade* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009) 58.



Third World. 'Revolution', in itself not an entirely new concept within ecumenical thought but tainted by its association with communism, was understood by Shaull and others as a 'permanent revolution', signifying not 'a sudden political overthrow of a regime' but 'slowly forcing the political and economic system to change'.<sup>601</sup> An important element in this understanding of 'revolution', though, was Shaull's rejection of strict adherence to nonviolence: "there may in fact be some situations, in which only the threat or use of violence can set the process of change in motion".<sup>602</sup> For this reason as well as the concept's radical implications more generally, many European delegates resisted it.<sup>603</sup> An attempt by General Secretary W.A. Visser 't Hooft to mollify Shaull and likeminded ecumenists by calling for the notion of a responsible society to be 'renewed and reinterpreted in view of the need for a responsible world community and the demands for international economic justice' failed.<sup>604</sup> In the view of representatives of the 'Third World', this concept of a global responsible society 'relied on a far too harmonious picture of a world community'. As Schilling writes, after thus upending the consensus position of the 'responsible society', those who wanted to address the uneven relationship between the global North and South shifted from the concept of 'revolution' to 'humanization' and 'liberation'.<sup>605</sup> Liberation theology became the most important channel through which the ecumenical movement was exhorted to respond to the demands of its increasingly global constituency.<sup>606</sup>

Both ISAL and the WCC were key actors in the development of liberation theology. ISAL would organize five of the most important conferences on liberation theology during the early 1970s.<sup>607</sup> And through the Joint Commission on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX), the WCC and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace together created 'a space where the approach of liberation theology was designed and discussed ecumenically'.<sup>608</sup> This cooperation in itself reflected the remarkable rapprochement between Protestantism and Catholicism, already noted at the end of chapter 3. At SODEPAX's 1969 Cartigny consultation, Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Catholic priest from Peru, and ISAL's Alves, both presented lengthy papers, which represented an important step in

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<sup>601</sup> Schilling, 'Between Context and Conflict', 285.

<sup>602</sup> WCC, *Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time: World Conference on Church and Society: Geneva, July 12-26, 1966: The Official Report with a Description of the Conference by M.M. Thomas and Paul Abrecht* (Geneva: WCC, 1967) 25.

<sup>603</sup> Schilling, 'Between Context and Conflict', 285.

<sup>604</sup> Quoted in Schilling, 'Between Context and Conflict', 285.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>606</sup> On the changes in the WCC's constituency, see Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, "Der Christ fürchtet den Umbruch nicht". Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Spannungsfeld von Dekolonisierung, Entwestlichung und Politisierung', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 21-74.

<sup>607</sup> Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 178.

<sup>608</sup> Schilling, 'Between Context and Conflict', 286.

moving from revolution to liberation – according to the historical sociologist Christian Smith, the event represented the ‘first international, public exposition of liberation theology’.<sup>609</sup> Gutiérrez presented the ideas that would underpin his 1971 book, *A Theology of Liberation*, which would become liberation theology’s seminal text. Alves wrote of the need to ‘help human communities to transform the wordless groaning [of the Spirit] into articulate and conscious speech. This is the new language we are looking for.’<sup>610</sup> (This reference originated in Exodus 2:24 – ‘God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob’ – and would be used by other theologians as well, including at the WCC.) In Alves’ view, the rise of Third World dictatorships, already apparent at this time, was a technocratic response (‘technologism’) to the problem of underdevelopment, to which he opposed the ‘process of humanization’, which ‘aims at no utopia but at a society which remains permanently open and unfinished’; ‘it is amidst the process that man finds his true humanity’.<sup>611</sup> Neither presentation, however, referred to human rights.

This was no coincidence: as Kelly has also written, ‘liberation theologians in the 1960s spoke rarely in the language of human rights’, focused as they were on ‘social and economic inequalities’. Gutiérrez’ *A Theology of Liberation* did not engage with human rights, a fact that Kelly explains as ‘less a conscious eschewal on his part than an example of the relative marginality of human rights before the 1970s’, a consequence of their apparent inutility in addressing questions of inequality.<sup>612</sup> An important aspect of this was the association of human rights with individual rights, not least property rights. This clashed with an analysis at the level of ‘the community’, which David Keith May describes as a core feature of Gutiérrez’ thought: he focused ‘on the marginalized and poor as a group rather than as individuals, and he often emphasizes the power of community action in addressing situations of oppression’.<sup>613</sup>

This skepticism or even suspicion of human rights was connected to longstanding Marxist critiques of the concept as one that served to legitimate bourgeois privileges and control over the masses. As Mark Engler has written, many liberation theologians were influenced by Marxism in viewing human rights as merely superstructural, as complicit in the maintenance of bourgeois property

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<sup>609</sup> Smith, *Emergence of Liberation Theology*, 186.

<sup>610</sup> Quoted in Schilling, *Revolution, Exil und Befreiung*, 184. Cf. Schilling, ‘Between Context and Conflict’, 288.

<sup>611</sup> Rubem Alves, ‘Theology and the Liberation of Man’, n.d. [1969], 12-13, WCCA Committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX) 4202.045.

<sup>612</sup> Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 32-33.

<sup>613</sup> David Keith May, ‘Individual and Collective Human Rights: The Contributions of Jacques Maritain, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Martha Nussbaum’ (PhD dissertation: The Florida State University, 2013) 105 and 107.

rights and (neo-)imperialist foreign influence, and as ultimately irrelevant to the future ‘new society’. Even in the late 1970s, according to Engler, as the Carter administration turned to the phrase, many liberation theologians, including Protestants, denounced it as an “‘ideological trap’”, ‘merely the most recent of the duplicitous attempts by which the United States government sought to put a human face on its domination of the third world’.<sup>614</sup> Indeed, there were good grounds for thinking this: the historian Christopher Dietrich has recently suggested that there was continuity between the Ford administration’s attempts to sow division among those calling for a New International Economic Order by focusing on human rights violations in newly independent countries and the Carter administration’s attempt to draw ‘a tighter link between the rise of human rights and the decline of sovereign rights’, through promotion of the ‘doctrine of “Basic Human Needs”’. This latter concept was meant to allow the United States ‘to close the “values gap” between the North and the South on the topic of “basic economic rights”, [State Department] analysts suggested’.<sup>615</sup> In other words, a focus on individual rights and economic needs was meant to neutralize demands for changes in international economic structures.

Engler argues that only by the late 1970s, some theologians and laymen began attempting to reconcile human rights and liberation theology, not by subscribing to liberal understandings but by redefining the concept’s meaning. To this end, a milestone 1978 volume on the Carter administration’s human rights policies brought together Latin American theologians. Its contributors included Bonino, formerly of ISAL, who had co-founded the Argentinian Permanent Assembly for Human Rights in 1975 and was then a president of the WCC. The volume’s contributors offered a distinctively Latin American reformulation of human rights. According to Engler, the “‘preferential option for the poor,” perhaps liberation theology’s key tenet, would eventually come to guide a liberationist approach to human rights.<sup>616</sup> Gutiérrez could thus write in 1978 that the ‘structural analysis’ by Latin American Christians had led them

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<sup>614</sup> Mark Engler, ‘Toward the “Rights of the Poor”’. Human Rights in Liberation Theology’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 28, 3 (2000) 339-365, quote on 343.

<sup>615</sup> Christopher R.W. Dietrich, *Oil Revolution: Anticolonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 290 and 309-310. Cf. Michael Franczak, ‘Human Rights and Basic Needs: Jimmy Carter’s North-South Dialogue, 1977-81’, *Cold War History* (forthcoming) <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2018.1468437> (accessed 22 July 2018).

<sup>616</sup> Engler, “‘Rights of the Poor’”, 352.

‘to speak of the “rights of the poor” and to interpret the defense of human rights under this new formality. This alternative language represents a critical approach to the laissez-faire, liberal doctrine to the effect that our society enjoys an equality that in fact does not exist.’<sup>617</sup>

According to Engler, this approach challenged the supposed universality of human rights. In the view of liberation theologians themselves, this meant not discarding the ideal of universality but rather truly realizing it, by correcting its established bias towards the rich and powerful. In the course of this undertaking, they not only demanded that human rights be implemented in such a way as to improve the position of the poor, but they also put forward new ‘rights such as the right to work, the right to participate in political and economic systems, and the right to transform society, as well as the right to equality’.<sup>618</sup> Thus, liberation theologians proposed a new approach both in terms of human rights norms and their implementation, both of which were geared to fashion the concept of human rights into an effective tool for achieving structural change in the specific context of Latin America.

Yet in the context of the ecumenical movement’s response to repression in Latin America, efforts at reconciling liberation theology and human rights were underway earlier than Engler’s account suggests. Already in 1971, for example, the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, who was primarily active in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) but also well-known at the WCC, attempted to articulate a ‘theological basis of human rights and of the liberation of man’. He did so in response to a call from the WARC’s 1970 Assembly to study this subject. Moltmann’s discussion paper sought to ‘think through in a fundamental way the theological basis of human rights so that the summons of human rights does not remain a declaration to which we are not really bound’.<sup>619</sup> Moltmann’s adoption of a perspective of liberation theology showed in his criticism of the Universal Declaration for expressing nothing ‘about suffering within the world which is necessarily entailed in the struggle for liberation’. Therefore, the Declaration had to be extended ‘in reference to social obligations’, namely ‘obligations to liberation of those from whom these rights [which secure the freedom of individuals] are withheld from others’. Moltmann challenged those who grounded human rights in ‘a Christian *doctrine* of natural law and a Christian doctrine of *creation*’. Instead, a ‘*theology of human rights*’ should begin ‘with the concrete meaning of liberation’, moving on from here to present ‘the universal meaning of this freedom as universal human right [sic] and the common future of this freedom as new humanity’. Only in this way could ‘universal theories and declarations about the

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<sup>617</sup> Quoted in May, ‘Individual and Collective Human Rights’, 108.

<sup>618</sup> Engler, “‘Rights of the Poor’”, 357.

<sup>619</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, ‘Theological Basis of Human Rights and of the Liberation of Man’, November 1971, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.4.

freedom of man be protected from their misuse'.<sup>620</sup> Thus, Moltmann subscribed to liberation theology's fundamental tenet that one must begin from praxis and from the viewpoint of the poor and the oppressed. The concept and content of human rights followed from this approach as a core insight and moral imperative.<sup>621</sup> Moltmann's thought would become an important locus of negotiation between European and Latin American perspectives: as Engler writes, from the late 1970s he would be one of the 'first-world theologians and human rights advocates (...) [who] admonished liberation theologians to look for the good in philosophical liberalism.' Moltmann and others would charge 'those who were unwilling to do so with throwing the baby of human rights out with the bathwater of imperialism'.<sup>622</sup> Dialogue on this question was already underway within the WCC and particularly the activities of the CCIA and HRROLA as they responded to the rise of military dictatorships.

## The WCC's engagement before Chile

### *Brazil and Uruguay*

The CCIA's documents of the early 1970s show how it self-consciously chose the frame of human rights as the appropriate one to combat repression, while maintaining a structural analysis of its causes at the same time. In 1971, American Rev. Dwain C. Epps, the CCIA's recently appointed Study Secretary, wrote an overview of the situation in Latin America. Epps, who had previously been active in the American civil rights movement and had attended the 1966 Geneva conference, had taken part in the Frontier Internship in Mission Project, serving with ISAL in Buenos Aires from 1967, until Nilus had asked him to join him in Geneva.<sup>623</sup> In his analysis, Epps wrote that

'where no provision has been taken to insure [sic] that a nation participates justly in the profits derived from the exploitation of its natural resources and manpower by foreign investors, not only is little done to narrow the gap between rich and poor, oligarchies find themselves obliged to resort to frequently brutal political repression in order to maintain their privileged position.'<sup>624</sup>

His analysis continued: 'The clearest response the CCIA can make to the situation described above is to be found within the frame of reference of the protection of human rights.' On the one hand, this

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<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>621</sup> For an overview of Latin American liberation theology's precepts, see Rebecca S. Chopp, 'Latin American Liberation Theology', in David F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1997; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1996) 409-425. See also Lilian Calles Barger, *The World Come of Age: An Intellectual History of Liberation Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) (this work was published too late to be used in this study).

<sup>622</sup> Engler, "Rights of the Poor", 351.

<sup>623</sup> Interview by the author with Dwain C. Epps, 22 July 2016.

<sup>624</sup> Dwain C. Epps, 'Latin America: The Present Situation and a Projection of Priorities for CCIA Study and Action', July 1971, 5, WCCA CCIA 428.04.14.7.2.11.

meant action at the international level: 'all that we do to promote the improved functioning of the United Nations in this area, and to encourage it to establish effective implementation procedures is of service to Latin America in general'. But this being said, Epps wrote that such work could 'only be done if it is pursued in close co-operation with Christians in that continent [Latin America]. Therefore it is important to further improve our communication with them and to make possible frequent contacts with them.' According to Epps, such contacts were already exercising a decisive influence on the WCC's work: 'In many ways it is the local groups which set our agenda in this regard.'<sup>625</sup> This emphasis on the agency of local groups would remain a constant in the WCC's efforts.

The first country that drew the WCC's attention was Brazil, which had been under military dictatorship since a coup in 1964, but where repression intensified significantly from December 1968 on.<sup>626</sup> The WCC had maintained close relations with Brazilian member churches since the 1950s. Information began to trickle out of the country, and in February 1970, the WCC Executive Committee 'noted that there was growing concern about the increasing number of reports alleging severe curtailment of human rights and legal guarantees in Brazil'. It moved for 'the proper bodies of the World Council' to support 'those who, in conscience, may be struggling for the realization of human rights for all without discrimination'.<sup>627</sup> On 22 July 1970, 'a clandestine network of Brazilian lawyers, historians and dissident diplomats' submitted a ten-page document on human rights violations to the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and the WCC. Based on this, in 1971, the CCIA, the ICJ, Pax Romana, and the World Federation of Trade Unions, submitted a report on torture and political imprisonment to the UN Commission on Human Rights.<sup>628</sup> This effort did not yield any immediate results, however, and the appeal remained an exceptional initiative. Another important initiative in Brazil took place independently from the WCC, but rather picked up on the Vatican's 1967 creation of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In 1972, Paulo Evaristo Arns, Cardinal of São Paulo, 'initiated the creation of Justice and Peace Commissions (...) whose aim was to conduct study projects of socioeconomic needs in different areas and provide material assistance for political prisoners and their families'. Yet the functioning of these Commissions depended on the personal role of prelates

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<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>626</sup> On human rights in Brazil more generally, see James N. Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>627</sup> Minutes and Records of the WCC Executive Committee, 16-20 February 1970, Geneva, 13.

<sup>628</sup> Charles R. Harper, *O Acompanhamento: Ecumenical Action for Human Rights in Latin America 1970-1990* (Geneva: WCC, 2006) 7.

such as ‘Arns himself, Aloísio Lorscheider and Helder Câmara’, meaning that by 1978, ‘only four were functioning properly’.<sup>629</sup> Human rights activity in Brazil thus remained limited.

A 15 March 1973 declaration of human rights produced by the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil showcased the fluidity of human rights at this time. The document put forward nineteen proposals, which branched into many subproposals. For instance, the Brazilian Church was called to work for rights such as that to ‘instruction’, ‘a just wage for work’ as well as the right ‘to work’, to ‘Sunday rest’, to ‘the possession of land for those who work it’, and the right ‘to life, threatened by birth-control campaign [sic] and by an excessively-permissive legislation on the subject of abortion’. Another proposal put forward such rights as that to ‘development’, to ‘protest’, to ‘a true picture of situations’, to ‘one’s own view of the world’, to ‘respect one’s own private sphere’, and to ‘conscientious objection’. From the ‘right to development’, the Brazilian bishops inferred that it was ‘a right of poor nations, and consequently a duty for rich nations, that the development of the latter is not at the expense of the poor nations, and this duty involves also the obligation of restitution’.<sup>630</sup> Through these and many other proposals, the Brazilian episcopate supported a conception of human rights that was open to creative adaptation, and primarily a matter for the Brazilian churches, people, and government.

The most significant exception to this was the document’s fourteenth proposal, by which the Brazilian bishops called for a ‘world tribunal on Human Dignity’, ‘whose function would be to judge, from an ethical point of view, the régimes which violate the basic Rights of the human person, taking as a fundamental criterion for their judgements the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights’. The Universal Declaration thus served as an impartial standard, which could be applied irrespective of ‘the sectarian attitudes of religious or ideological groups’. The proposed tribunal would also have to avoid being captured by authoritarian states, and therefore ‘[j]udges from those countries where these rights are systematically violated would not form part’.<sup>631</sup> This proposal could be read as a critique of the UN’s Commission on Human Rights, which did not exclude members based on their human rights records. It also chimed with continuing debates at the UN on whether to establish a High Commissioner for Human Rights. The bishops’ document did not show any direct awareness of such debates, however, and it may make more sense to read it skeptically, as a vague call for

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<sup>629</sup> Pamela Lowden, *Moral Opposition to Authoritarian Rule in Chile, 1973-90* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996) 18-19.

<sup>630</sup> Press Office of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, ‘The Bishops of Brazil Call for a World Tribunal on Human Dignity’, 15 March 1973, 2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1 (this document is not the original press release but a – possibly translated and/or altered – reproduction of its contents).

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (emphasis omitted).

international concern with little sense of how a ‘world tribunal’ ought to be realized. It shows that the possibility of international judicial enforcement of human rights was part of the bishops’ imagination, but only a marginal one.

In the early 1970s, Uruguayans also began to turn to the language of human rights to articulate their claims against the state. Uruguayan transnational activism has been studied in-depth by the historian Vania Markarian, who has shown the complications involved in activists’ gradual turn to human rights language. As in Brazil, even though state repression was intensifying, Uruguayan activists were not immediately drawn to human rights language, since it was a concept they had previously rejected as ‘bourgeois’ and unhelpful to their goals. Markarian describes a 5-11 September 1971 meeting on the relevance of human rights for Latin America, organized by the University of the Republic in Montevideo, in cooperation with the National Confederation of Workers (*Convención Nacional de Trabajadores del Uruguay*) and the Latin American Confederation of Christian Unions (*Confederación Latinoamericana Sindical Cristiana*, CLASC) – a record of which also reached the WCC and influenced its thinking. As she writes, the university’s president, Oscar Maggiolo, ‘refused to discuss international legislation and instead argued that economic exploitation by industrialized countries was the cause of human rights violations’. Instead of human rights as articulated by the UN, participants by and large focused on the need for structural economic change and liberation, as well as criticism of ‘international organizations as “tools of U.S. imperialism”’.<sup>632</sup> The CLASC’s contribution briefly mentioned that in response to violence in Guatemala, CLASC had requested an ‘intervention of an Investigative Commission to the United Nations, especially to the Division for Human Rights, to the ILO [International Labor Organization] and to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’, which showed some willingness to make use of international instruments when possible.<sup>633</sup> Yet the piece was dominated by the language of political solidarity and dependency, ending with a call for ‘liberatory revolution’ and the statement that ‘[o]nly the people can save the people’.<sup>634</sup>

As political repression intensified, however, particularly after the 1973 military coup, the space for political radicalism shrank and leftist Uruguayans needed allies abroad. Like other Latin American activists, they found that human rights could galvanize support. Markarian argues that embracing human rights language required Uruguayan activists to change their rhetoric from one of heroism to

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<sup>632</sup> Vania Markarian, *Left in Transformation: Uruguayan Exiles and the Latin American Human Rights Networks, 1967-1984* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 65.

<sup>633</sup> Translation mine. CLASC, ‘América Latina: los derechos humanos y el movimiento obrero’, in *Foro internacional sobre la vigencia de los derechos humanos en América Latina* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, 1972) 139-156, quote on 154.

<sup>634</sup> Translation mine. CLASC, ‘América Latina’, 156.



one of victimhood and from one of radical political (including social and economic) change to one demanding respect for minimum rules of political conduct.<sup>635</sup> Surveying the rhetoric of various Uruguayan exile groups in the early 1970s, Markarian concludes that some stuck to revolutionary language and others reframed their concerns along the lines of Amnesty International's language. This could lead to great tension – for instance, in 1975 the French-Uruguayan Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners in Uruguay (*Comité de Défense des Prisonniers Politiques en Uruguay*) split into two over the question of whether to address wider issues underlying torture and imprisonment or not.<sup>636</sup> Between groups that made the transition, however, human rights allowed them to form a united front to the outside world. Yet Markarian argues that in spite of this (at least until the 1980s) competing underlying visions continued to exist and activists generally did not attempt to reconcile their use of human rights language with their political goals, viewing the former merely as a means towards realizing the latter.<sup>637</sup> Human rights language was thus primarily a means to a political end – yet for activist exiles, with no direct power, means could gradually supplant ends.

The WCC became directly involved after a set of meetings with Latin American church leaders in May highlighted the extent of the government's repressive measures, which were aimed above all at countering the urban guerilla of the Tupamaros but extended to those suspected of supporting them. For instance, the Uruguayan Methodist minister Dr. Julio Barreiro, an associate of ISAL, reported he 'had had his house visited', in his absence, by a "death squad".<sup>638</sup> The WCC's General Secretary Eugene Carson Blake decided to send a WCC delegation composed of three American churchmen, which visited the country from 9-14 June 1972 (Amnesty, by comparison, would only send a mission in 1974). The delegation was hosted by Emilio Castro, the Methodist part-time secretary general of the Protestant 'Pro-Unity' Commission in Latin America (*Movimiento Pro-Unidad Evangélica en América Latina*), which would prepare the ground for the establishment of the Latin American Council of Churches (*Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias*, 1982). Castro would join the WCC in 1973, as director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and would subsequently become the WCC's general secretary (1985-1992).<sup>639</sup> The delegation also met with ISAL's Odell, Santa Ana, and Barreiro. Those they interviewed were consistent in drawing attention to state repression,

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<sup>635</sup> Markarian, *Left in Transformation*, 104.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid., 100-102.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., 132-142.

<sup>638</sup> Niilus to Blake, 'Rev. Emilio Castro's letter of June 16, 1972', 27 June 1972, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>639</sup> Olav Fykse Tveit, 'Emilio Castro', 8 April 2013, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/tributes/tribute-to-emilio-castro> (accessed 21 July 2018)

especially torture, but differed as to what ought to be done about this. Some thought international support was futile, or even that all hope was lost: meeting with the President of the Supreme Court, Dr. Carlos Dubra, the delegates asked whether he believed that an appeal to the Organization of American States (OAS) would be useful; Dubra ‘says “Maybe” and shrugs with the unspoken fear that this too seems hopeless’.<sup>640</sup> When the delegation met Senator Zelmar Michelini, who would become a leading voice on human rights until his assassination in 1974, however, and asked what they might contribute, Michelini said that the ‘church should stand clearly for the preservation and protection of private and public rights’, especially in relation to torture.<sup>641</sup> (Michelini’s later efforts would focus on mobilizing the attention of the US Congress, above all.)

A meeting hosted by the Uruguayan Federation of Churches was suggestive of tensions between human rights and leftist political radicalism. Castro as well as the WCC delegates used the language of human rights and church solidarity in order to facilitate dialogue between progressive and conservative attendees. The meeting proceeded along these lines until ‘a group of individuals brought in by ISAL who are not part of the Federation’ took a more political stance. One of them spoke emotionally of his recent personal experience of torture, and the contributors ‘gave the meeting a political bend, arguing for a radical left ideology’.<sup>642</sup> Castro signaled his displeasure with this, because, as he had expected, the conservative attendees considered this turn of events ‘politically inspired, unfair, etc.’, damaging the dialogue that he had wanted to instigate. (Upon receiving Castro’s complaint, however, the response of Niilus was that Castro must have had written his letter merely to appease the Uruguayan authorities.)<sup>643</sup> The WCC thus began grappling with the question of how to address repression in Uruguay, even before the 1973 military coup marked the start of twelve years of yet more intense authoritarianism in the country.

### *Regional contacts*

The WCC’s nascent work on Brazil and Uruguay, as well as meetings with SODEPAX and ‘a pilot project on human rights law and defense of political prisoners in Argentina’, led the WCC’s staff to begin ‘to “dream” of broader possibilities of involving the churches more deeply in the field of

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<sup>640</sup> Eugene L. Stockwell, ‘Initial Report on Visit to Uruguay’, 14 June 1972, 5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>643</sup> Niilus to Blake, ‘Rev. Emilio Castro’s letter of June 16, 1972’, 27 June 1972, 2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

human rights', Epps recapitulated in June 1973.<sup>644</sup> At a 7 November 1972 meeting, the WCC's Latin America Working Party recommended that the WCC give priority 'to the formation of a Working Group on Human Rights composed of leaders of the member Churches who have shown their concern about the violations of said rights'. Facilitated not only by the CCIA but also two other bodies that were part of the WCC's Unit II on Justice and Service, the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee, and World Service and the CCPD, this working group would 'aim at least to start a process which will educate the Latin American Churches and, in consequence those in the rich world, about the attacks on human dignity which take place in Latin America'. Envisioned members of the working group included Latin American Protestants, such as Bonino and Federico Pagura, an Argentinian Methodist bishop who would later come to head the Latin American Council of Churches, but also Archbishop Arns.<sup>645</sup>

The Working Party's proposal resulted in a 'Consultation on Human Rights and the Churches in Latin America', held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 25-28 February 1973. The participants reported 'a very sad picture' of 'brutal repression'; '[i]n country after country we find a reign of terror produced by unjust [sic] national and international structures and imposed either directly, through the police or the military, or indirectly through para-police groups, by the authorities'.<sup>646</sup> In the face of such repression, 'mere expressions of solidarity are no longer sufficient': 'Thus we have met to see what we can and must do together with and through our churches to ensure better protection of all men on this continent.' In Latin America itself, churches and Christians in general would have to be awakened to 'a profound and permanent sensitivity to abuse'.<sup>647</sup> But the most promising 'resources' existed on the 'national and local' level, with 'no limits to their creative and imaginative utilization'. These included '[p]rograms of conscientization for ecclesiastical leaders', communication that 'could reach communities and social sectors which are not literate', and 'organized ecumenical teams' which could familiarize themselves with 'the crude reality of the violation of human rights' and then become 'conscientization agents in their respective communities'. The consultation also mentioned the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration as an opportunity. Other proposals

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<sup>644</sup> Epps to Fillibeck, 8 June 1973, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2. On Argentina, see William Michael Schmidli, *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere: Human Rights and U.S. Cold War Policy toward Argentina* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), and Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, ch. 6-7.

<sup>645</sup> Niius to Potter, Bodipo Malumba and Santa Ana, 'Human Rights in Latin America', 16 November 1972, enclosure 'Latin America Working Party', 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>646</sup> Epps, 'Consultation on Human Rights and the Churches in Latin America, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 25th-28th February 1973', n.d., 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

were much more far-reaching, such as an already-approved project to develop ‘a modern Protestant catechism which could serve the Protestant Churches of Latin America [sic] in their reinterpretation of the Gospel for our time’.<sup>648</sup> As this connection suggests, what was at stake in the struggle against repression was not only human dignity but the nature of the church in relation to society. If ‘division’ was the price to pay for this, the consultation’s participants thought this acceptable. It could even be understood as an inevitable product of conscientization, since ‘when, upon perceiving the socio-politico-economic implications of the Gospel, some accept to serve it at any price and others resist doing so because in the depth of their beings they want only to be served by it’.<sup>649</sup>

The consultation held that international bodies such as the WCC could play a supplementary role in the process of conscientization, by developing their relations with churches, and undertaking ‘concrete actions and decisions (e.g. the Program to Combat Racism of the WCC)’.<sup>650</sup> The WCC was asked to create a ‘special program for the defense of human rights in Latin America’, or to ‘expand and strengthen presently existing WCC programs in this field’. The proposed special program would act as a channel to the OAS, UN, and non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, and ‘channel aid in an adequate way to political prisoners, political refugees and/or their families’. Furthermore, it would work closely together with a newly to be established ecumenical Latin American human rights commission. Such a commission, while it was not in fact established, would act in ‘defense of human rights as they [sic] are defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, and as seen in the light of the Gospel’.<sup>651</sup> Its work was to be complemented at the ‘national and/or regional levels’ by envisioned ecumenical human rights groups.<sup>652</sup> Thus, by early 1973 – well before the coup in Chile – Latin American Christians and their allies in the WCC were aiming to develop a fully-fledged transnational advocacy network for the protection of human rights. The WCC’s HRROLA, discussed below, would in some ways embody the proposal for an ecumenical Latin American human rights commission.

A letter by Epps to Giorgio Fillibeck, of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome, provides a window into the CCIA’s thinking at this time. Summarizing the WCC’s trajectory on human rights in Latin America, Epps wrote that

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<sup>648</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid., 4 (emphasis omitted in first quotation).

<sup>652</sup> Ibid., 5.

‘we were taking a qualitative leap from old ways of focussing on human rights as we began to think in these terms. Taking the old language of human rights, so frequently and rightly criticized for being a liberal facade for ignominious behaviour in too many cases, we sought to give it a new content. Thus, we hoped, one could speak to a rather conservative institutional church constituency in a language which those who read the Bible must be able to understand, i.e. the language of concern for one’s neighbor; and thereby we could help to conscientize churchmen to the structural realities of violence and injustice.’<sup>653</sup>

This statement provided a remarkably candid and concise explanation of the CCIA’s strategy: it saw in human rights a malleable concept, the moral appeal of which resonated with core tenets of Christianity, while its underlying content could and had to be reshaped into something that transcended liberalism and instead addressed structural injustice.

Similarly, in another letter, Epps wrote that it was the Puerto Rico consultation’s conviction that human rights was

‘one place in which nearly all Christians, regardless of their political convictions, must agree if they are at all faithful to the Gospel: Christians must be concerned about the fate of their fellow-men when they are tortured, intimidated when they have taken courageous stands against inhuman treatment, cut off from the truth by censorship, and marginated [sic] from national life by the destruction of long-respected democratic values’.<sup>654</sup>

Human rights thus served as the common ground on which ecumenical activists sought to build support for opposition against repression, which they hoped would then broaden into support for the radical social changes needed to address the root causes of this repression.

More generally, Epps and his colleagues sought ‘to determine how we could encourage churchmen in Latin America and elsewhere to be more courageous in defense of their of their [sic] oppressed brothers and sisters, and how we could at international levels cooperate and aid their efforts.’ Such international cooperation was essential, because Epps and his colleagues had observed that

‘an individual or a small group working at a national level to defend political prisoners and document cases of violation of human rights were far too exposed to work effectively at the public level which in a sense is necessary for effective actions through the courts, despite the very minimum protection the latter provide’.

Epps noted that the WCC and local actors were thinking in parallel on the need for international cooperation: ‘the idea was not exclusively being developed here, but independently by isolated groups of churchmen in Latin America’.<sup>655</sup> Epps had an interest in emphasizing local agency, of course, which

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<sup>653</sup> Epps to Giorgio Fillibeck, 8 June 1973, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2. The inconsistency in British/American spelling (‘behaviour’, ‘neighbor’) is in the original.

<sup>654</sup> Epps to Joao Parahyba da Silva, 17 May 1973, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2.

<sup>655</sup> Epps to Giorgio Fillibeck, 8 June 1973, 1-2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2.

would contribute to the legitimacy of WCC efforts, countering the impression that this would be ‘an initiative which goes from “Geneva down to Latin America”’. The WCC, he wrote, merely ‘provide[d] the supportive assistance they [Latin Americans] request of us’.<sup>656</sup> Yet the importance of its role in offering such support and bringing together different church leaders should not be underestimated. Moreover, its ability to function as a conduit between Latin American Christians on one hand and non-governmental organizations, governments and intergovernmental organizations on the other, helped open up avenues of international support that might otherwise have remained unavailable.

However, it is important to emphasize that in the Latin American context, the language of human rights did not necessarily refer to international fora such as the UN or the OAS. Various publications by Latin American church leaders from early 1973 showed disillusionment with the toothlessness of international organizations: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had set forth rights but these could not be enforced. Pagura wrote that this and other declarations were, ‘[f]or the most part (...) merely dead-letters, more honored in the breach than in the observance for most politicians’.<sup>657</sup> Uruguayan church leaders observed that even specifically hemispheric instruments like the Inter-American Commission of the OAS and the incorporation of human rights into many Latin American constitutions had not prevented the surge in human rights violations.<sup>658</sup> One of the WCC Working Group’s core members, Julio de Santa Ana, described the Universal Declaration as ‘an act of courage and hope on the part of the international community which should be valued and appreciated’. However, he continued, ‘no one could claim that much progress has been achieved in the 25 years that have elapsed since its adoption’. Even though ‘the archives of the United Nations contain hundreds of thousands of accusations concerning the violation of human rights’, ‘no effective action has been taken’.<sup>659</sup> Santa Ana called for moving past ‘intellectual formulas’ and engaging in ‘effective action’, in which regard he mentioned the WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism as breaking new ground.<sup>660</sup> This chimed with liberation theologians’ skepticism of declarations of rights: rather than putting one’s faith in declarations of rights, what was needed was a praxis of human rights that realized them from the grassroots up.

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<sup>656</sup> Epps to Joao Parahyba da Silva, 17 May 1973, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.2.

<sup>657</sup> Federico Pagura, ‘The Human Rights Crisis in Latin America’, published in an unidentified 1973 issue of *World Update*, 11, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>658</sup> No author, ‘Vigencia de los Derechos Humanos’, 22 July 1973, 3, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>659</sup> Julio de Santa Ana, ‘The Human Rights Issue from a Third World Perspective’, n.d. [early 1973], 1-2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

Thus, while Latin American church leaders did not generally see international human rights instruments as part of the solution, they did analyze the problem in terms of human rights. Camara and his colleagues framed their appeal as ‘statements on human rights’.<sup>661</sup> Pagura described ‘the human rights crisis in Latin America’ in terms of poverty and marginalization leading to conflict and repression.<sup>662</sup> Santa Ana pleaded for a reframing of human rights to include both a collective and an individual understanding: there was ‘a twofold violation of human rights in the Third World, the violation of the rights of the masses, who comprise the societies of the poor nations, and the violation of the rights of those who struggle for those rights to be respected.’<sup>663</sup> All saw a need for the churches to educate and sensitize – ‘conscientize’ – their peoples, especially the poor, with respect to human rights, in spite of the differences in what they meant by the latter term. This pastoral use of human rights language constituted a distinctly Christian approach, which preceded other forms of human rights engagement and would continue to be a major strand of ecumenical human rights engagement vis-à-vis Latin America – and beyond.

Latin American Christians and their allies did not understand the turn to human rights as an abandonment of Christian principles in favor of secular ones, as some charged at the time, but rather a rethinking of the Christian message and its implications for the churches’ role in society. On 5 October 1973, Aldo Vannuchi, a Brazilian former priest and critic of the dictatorship there, who acted as a special consultant to the CCIA on human rights, wrote a memorandum in which he reflected on the ‘essential motivation’ for holding a consultation on human rights. Vannuchi wrote that ‘[f]or us the point of departure is not the Universal Declaration of H[uman] R[ights], but the Word of God’. This word was revealed ‘in Scripture, in the Church and in Events’, such as ‘the struggle of individuals and of peoples for their liberation from oppression’. ‘Salvation and liberation’ were ‘a process of cross and resurrection’, and ‘fighting for’ human rights meant to take part in this process. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ‘reflection and action’ of the church found ‘a provisional and partial, but extremely valid, expression’ of ‘the inspiring Word of God who saves’.<sup>664</sup> Julio de Santa Ana responded to Vannuchi’s memorandum by writing that he felt it was right in emphasizing that the

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<sup>661</sup> IDOC, “I Have Heard the Cry of My People”, 15 June 1973, 30, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1 (the original statement, here presented in translation, was put out on 6 May 1973).

<sup>662</sup> Federico Pagura, ‘The Human Rights Crisis in Latin America’, published in an unidentified 1973 issue of *World Update*, 11, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>663</sup> Julio de Santa Ana, ‘The Human Rights Issue from a Third World Perspective’, n.d. [early 1973], 4, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.

<sup>664</sup> Translation mine. Aldo Vannuchi, ‘Considerações a respeito da Consulta sobre os DH’, 5 October 1973, 1-2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.3.

‘focus of our attention must not be the legal notion of Human Rights (Universal Declaration, Philosophy of Law, History of Law, etc.) but fundamentally the Word of God’.<sup>665</sup>

In a subsequent 26 October 1973 memorandum, Vannuchi confronted head-on the question of whether Latin American Christians’ turn to human rights was ‘tactical’ or ‘programmatic’. He argued that ‘Christians of Latin America are more conscious today of their need to struggle for human rights precisely because they are achieving a greater consciousness of the Latin American reality and of their christian [sic] commitment.’<sup>666</sup> This ‘reality’ consisted above all, for Vannuchi, in ‘foreign imperialism’. Vannuchi’s perspective thus mixed a conception of collective sin with an anti-imperialist political analysis, as was common at the time:

‘Is all of this only the fruits of the abuse of power by certain authorities? This we absolutely cannot accept. The roots of the evil are not to be found in given persons or circumstances, rather in the economic, political and social system, the whole of which is oppressive, unjust [sic], violently inhuman. Therefore in Latin America, the struggle for human rights is a struggle for liberation.’<sup>667</sup>

What this meant in practice would be put to the test in Chile, which was being turned into a military dictatorship at the very time Vannuchi was writing.

## Repression in Chile and the Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America

On 11 September 1973, after months of increasing tensions, a military coup brought down Salvador Allende’s democratic socialist government. The downfall of Allende, whose government had been lionized by many as the future of reformed socialism, struck a major blow to the left in South America and beyond. Repression was especially fierce during the initial months of the junta’s rule, leaving no space for political opposition. Many thousands of Chileans were exiled – 200,000 were living abroad by the mid-1970s. But a global outcry and activity by international nongovernmental organizations (Amnesty, the ICJ, the International Committee of the Red Cross) as well as intergovernmental organizations (the UN, the OAS) and governments (Sweden and the Netherlands,

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<sup>665</sup> Translation mine. Santa Ana to Vannuchi, 8 October 1973, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.3 (emphasis in original).

<sup>666</sup> Aldo Vannuchi, ‘Latin American Christians in the Struggle for Human Rights’, 26 October 1973, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.3.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid., 5.



*inter alia*) created opportunities for Chilean exiles to exert pressure on the Chilean government, galvanizing a worldwide campaign that soon made human rights language a centerpiece of its efforts.<sup>668</sup>

The Chilean coup swiftly led to a surge in the WCC's involvement. It created a Chile Emergency Task Force, led by the Brazilian-born American Presbyterian Rev. Charles Harper. Through the rest of the 1970s, the WCC would raise and spend many hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in support of the churches in Chile. The first use Chilean clergy made of this support was to establish the National Committee for Aid to Refugees (*Comité Nacional de Ayuda a los Refugiados*, CONAR), on 6 October 1973, which worked to aid refugees, including the thousands of leftist exiles from other South American countries 'who had come to Santiago to take part in Allende's leftist experiment in democratic socialism'.<sup>669</sup> By April 1974, around 10,000 Chileans and foreigners had been helped to leave the country in this way – roughly an equal number to those resettled by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which began to work in Chile in parallel. In 1975, CONAR's work would be followed up by the *Fundación de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas*.<sup>670</sup>

As Kelly has also described, however, from early 1974, Harper voiced concerns over the downsides of this refugee-oriented response. Resettling refugees abroad was in line with the regime's desire to be rid of those who might oppose it, and once resettled, the exiles were expected to integrate into their new societies rather than engage with Chilean politics.<sup>671</sup> The limits of the status of mandate refugees under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention led many refugees to reject it, Harper reported, so as to better be able to 'associate freely with compatriots in the struggle for democracy and the liberation of their home country'.<sup>672</sup> Harper noted that existing structures to receive refugees in the West were established to receive 'refugees from communist regimes', leading to an unreceptive attitude towards leftist Chileans, only seventeen of whom had been accepted by the US, whereas in 1959 the country had taken in 40,000 Cubans.<sup>673</sup> Demand on the part of exiles, the continuation of repression in Chile, and the involvement of Amnesty and other actors all invited more far-reaching WCC involvement.

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<sup>668</sup> Cf. Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, ch. 2; Jan Eckel, "'Under a Magnifying Glass": The International Human Rights Campaign against Chile in the Seventies', in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 321-41.

<sup>669</sup> Kelly, 'Human Rights and Christian Responsibility', 106.

<sup>670</sup> Lowden, *Moral Opposition*, 79.

<sup>671</sup> Patrick William Kelly, 'Sovereignty and Salvation: Transnational Human Rights Activism in the Americas in the Long 1970s' (PhD dissertation: University of Chicago, 2015) 98-99. Cf. Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 75.

<sup>672</sup> Harper, 'Progress Report, Chile Task Force', n.d. [June 1974], 3, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

<sup>673</sup> Harper to Chile (& Latin American Human Rights) Task Force members, 'Evaluation and proposals meeting on Tuesday June 11th, 9-11 a.m. Salle III', 10 June 1974, 2, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

As the refugee problem became less pronounced over the first half of 1974, the WCC's emphasis shifted to a second organization that had been founded in the coup's wake, also using WCC funds: the Pro-Peace Committee [*Comité de Cooperación para la Paz en Chile* or simply *Comité Pro-Paz*, COPACHI]. The organization had the blessing of the Archbishop of Santiago, Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, and was presided over by the head of the Lutheran Church in Chile, Bishop Helmut Frenz, and Mgr. Ariztúa, the auxiliary bishop of Santiago. COPACHI's ecumenical directorate included representatives of the Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Methodist Pentecostal, and Greek Orthodox Churches, as well as of the Jewish community (though this ecumenical representation would erode over time). The wide representation of Protestants should be seen in light of Chile's comparatively high number of Protestants: close to 22 per cent of the total population in 1985.<sup>674</sup> The lay staff it recruited was mostly 'of the Christian left and, particularly, the' Popular Unitary Action Movement (*Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario*), a small party of leftist Christians that had been part of Allende's Popular Unity coalition.<sup>675</sup> José Zalaquett, who had taught law at the Catholic University and prior to that served as a junior member of the Allende government, came to play an important role from his appointment in January 1974 on. Under his leadership, the Committee's legal department would file 2343 writs of *habeas corpus*, which were only successful on three occasions, but which carried symbolic significance – not least because the documentation involved was sent on to bishops 'and later on to the relevant international organisations, notably the human rights commissions of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the UN'.<sup>676</sup> Thanks to Zalaquett's work and the WCC's financial support, the organization grew to 150 staff members in three months.

How did the Pro-Peace Committee come to embrace human rights language? As Kelly writes, in Zalaquett's 2011 recollection, it was a visit by representatives of Amnesty in November 1973, above all, that inculcated human rights into the Pro Peace Committee's work, whereas until then that language had been infrequent. One of the co-founders of the organization, Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz, on the other hand, described in his memoirs that he had wanted to call the organization the 'Ecumenical Committee for the Defense of Human Rights', but had been, in Kelly's words, 'overruled by none other than the institutional godfather of the Pro-Peace Committee', Cardinal Silva, 'who saw the use of "human rights" in the group's name as too direct a provocation to the Chilean junta'.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Jeffrey Klaiber, *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1998) 52.

<sup>675</sup> Lowden, *Moral Opposition*, 32-33.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>677</sup> Kelly, 'Sovereignty and Salvation', 95-96.

Frenz recalled a phrase attributed to the Chilean Interior Minister General Oscar Bonilla's: 'Well, the government is responsible for defending human rights.'<sup>678</sup> This latter account suggests a greater initial awareness of human rights than Zalaquett's, which may have derived from Frenz' engagement with the ecumenical movement, especially the Lutheran World Federation, which had begun a systematic process of reflection on human rights in 1970.

Though the work of its legal department has received the most attention, as a result of its ecclesiastical origins and connections, and diverging from the more limited agenda of Amnesty, the Pro-Peace Committee's agenda was and remained wider than civil and political rights. In a meeting with the WCC's Chile Task Force on 31 May 1974, Zalaquett argued that the churches were uniquely well-placed to take a two-pronged approach to delegitimizing the Chilean regime: they should expose 'the sham and the myth behind' not only the "legality" of the junta but also its "economic justice", in terms of jobs, inflation, and availability of goods and services.<sup>679</sup> Zalaquett argued that the government had 'in effect isolated itself, alienating even the Christian Democratic party, 'which was behind the overthrow of the Allende government'; 'even the right wing "gremios" – or professional associations – are affected by the economic oppression'.<sup>680</sup> The element of 'economic justice' was also part of the WCC's thinking: in a March 1974 analysis of 'the internal structure of police and judicial repression', it observed that in Chile, 23 of the Universal Declaration's enumerated rights were being violated. Although most of these rights were civil and political, the analysis also called attention to Article 23 (the right to work, including the right to unionize), Article 25 (the right to an adequate standard of living), and Article 26 (the right to education). According to Harper, COPACHI compiled information on this laundry list of violations, 'resumés of which have been handed in regularly to the office of the Minister of the Interior, Oscar Bonilla, as well as serving as the basis of' an April 1974 protest by the Chilean episcopate to the junta.<sup>681</sup>

COPACHI's socioeconomic work partly took place in the realm of its legal activities. By 17 May 1974, it had handled 3823 cases in labor courts, compared to 3401 in penal courts, two thirds of which to dispute dismissals from public administration. But it also engaged in publicity work that went

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<sup>678</sup> Translation mine. Helmut Frenz, *Mi vida chilena: Solidaridad con los oprimidos*, trans. Sonia Plaut (Santiago: LOM, 2006) 140.

<sup>679</sup> Harper to Chile Task Force and interested friends, 'Situation in Chile', 5, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02. Cf. Kelly, 'Sovereignty and Salvation', 102, and Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 76.

<sup>680</sup> Harper to Chile Task Force and interested friends, 'Situation in Chile', 2, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

<sup>681</sup> Harper to Chile (& Latin American Human Rights) Task Force members, 'Evaluation and proposals meeting on Tuesday June 11th, 9-11 a.m. Salle III', 10 June 1974, 1, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

beyond drawing attention to civil and political rights violations, albeit in circuitous ways: in May 1974, the Committee published a weeklong serial in the Mexican paper *Excelsior*, detailing its findings ‘on torture, illegal detainment, economic oppression, and the wide circulation of such information in the international press’. Apart from legal and publicity work, COPACHI’s activities included

‘the creation of small work cooperatives, being a channel for food, clothing, blankets, money to families affected by penal and labor problems, looking for scholarships for students dismissed from universities and secondary schools, facilitating persons in danger to leave the country with legal and documentary (and financial) help’.<sup>682</sup>

Institutionalizing such activities, the organization established a Commission for Solidarity and Development, which aimed to establish ‘small employment-creating schemes in Chile basically for workers and peasants’.<sup>683</sup> Pamela Lowden has written that this Commission for Solidarity and Development ‘created 126 enterprises, employing nearly 2000 people’, by the end of 1975. In addition, COPACHI ran ‘lunch service[s] for malnourished children (...) which came to provide over 20 000 with daily meals’, ‘employment cooperatives, some 60 in number, participation in which ranged from 20 to 300’, and five ‘health centres’, attended by ‘[n]o fewer than 8138 people’ during the Committee’s existence. As Lowden writes, ‘the background to these developments was, on the one hand, the government’s reversal of the previous administration’s policies of improving the availability of health care and, on the other, its wider economic policies’, which included ‘shock stabilization policies to tackle the then 369 per cent inflation rate’.<sup>684</sup>

At the end of 1975, pressure from the Pinochet regime forced COPACHI to close down, but it was in many ways reconstituted in January 1976 as the Vicariate of Solidarity (*Vicaría de la Solidaridad*). A major difference was that the Vicariate had to be a purely Catholic affair, because its existence depended on the fact that it was formally part of the archdiocese of Santiago, but the WCC still provided more than half of its funds.<sup>685</sup> The Vicariate carried on the Pro Peace Committee’s activities in the socioeconomic realm. When Cardinal Silva published a pastoral letter on ‘solidarity’ in 1975, he built on COPACHI’s activities and applied liberation theology’s preferential option for the poor in his interpretation of ‘solidarity’: ‘the mutual dependency among men which means that some cannot feel

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<sup>682</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>683</sup> Harper to Ninan Koshy et al., ‘Meeting of Chile Task Force (Unit II Staff Advisory Group on Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America)’ 14 November 1974, 1-2, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

<sup>684</sup> Lowden, *Moral Opposition*, 39-40.

<sup>685</sup> Alexander Wilde, ‘The Institutional Church and Pastoral Ministry: Unity and Conflict in Defense of Human Rights in Chile’, in Wilde, ed., *Religious Responses to Violence*, 159-190, 167.

contented when the rest are not'.<sup>686</sup> Lowden writes that the letter 'made explicit that the defence of collective or economic rights was also integral to the defence of human dignity. In that respect, Lowden writes, "Solidarity" was the way in which Silva Henríquez chose to put his own stamp upon the liberal notion of human rights, with its connotations of an emphasis on individual rights'.<sup>687</sup> Similarly, in 1977, 'in his annual May Day homily, Silva Hénriquez spoke out strongly in defence of workers' rights, emphasising that he saw the respect for those rights as the true means of ensuring national security', a rebuke of the government's version of national security.<sup>688</sup> And when the Vicariate organized a major symposium on human rights from 22-25 November 1978, which promulgated the 'Santiago Letter', the letter dealt with not only civil and political rights, but also called attention to social and economic rights, and called for a New International Economic Order.<sup>689</sup>

The Chileans' ecumenical allies abroad, meanwhile, sought to avoid a reduction of the scope of human rights work to one concerned only with individual victims on a case by case basis. In 1974, Harper argued that human rights violations in Chile were 'a mass, and massive problem (...) [which] must be treated, therefore, as a mass problem, and not – as in the past – as a [sic] individual problem, by the churches'. He wrote that the churches ought to be 'the defender of the oppressed- not in terms, primarily, of the individual but in terms of groups of people'.<sup>690</sup> One way of conceiving of such groups, as in a later HRROLA report, was that of a 'repressed majority' pitted against a 'rich and powerful minority elite', but more specific groups could also be identified, such as the indigenous peoples of Brazil.<sup>691</sup> In a 1975 speech, Harper distinguished between '[d]irect repression and endemic structural repression'.<sup>692</sup> Harper's travel diaries from around this time also suggest his critical attitude to a narrow conception of human rights. Though these scribbled notes often leave unclear whether Harper was penning down his own thoughts or those of his interlocutors, they reveal a pattern of shared concerns. In a 1974 meeting with the Latin American Evangelical Commission for Christian Education (*Comisión Evangélica Latinoamericana de Educación Cristiana*), for instance, concluding notes stressed the importance of taking 'into account that legality is an elite instrument' and 'the fact that the Church has social

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<sup>686</sup> Quoted in Lowden, *Moral Opposition*, 54.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>689</sup> *Symposium Internacional: Experiencia y Compromiso Compartidos* (Santiago de Chile: Vicaría de la Solidaridad, 1979) 172.

<sup>690</sup> Harper to Chile (& Latin American Human Rights) Task Force members, 'Evaluation and proposals meeting on Tuesday June 11th, 9-11 a.m. Salle III', 10 June 1974, 2-3, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

<sup>691</sup> 'Report of the Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America (Programme Unit on Justice and Service) to The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, August 20-26, 1978 – Geneva', 2, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

<sup>692</sup> Harper, 'Human Rights and Christian Response in Latin America', 11 June 1975, 5, WCCA CCLA 428.15.3.5.1.4-6.

weight'. 'Solidarity' was key when it came to how to 'mobilize the Church'.<sup>693</sup> At a theological consultation in Costa Rica in 1974, Harper noted that it was key to 'maintain "*Liberation*" as the key theme. to avoid the concept of "victims" (individuals)'. Nevertheless, his colleagues would have to 'infiltrate all assemblies, group meetings w/[ith] the *h[uman]. rights theme*'.<sup>694</sup> These notes illustrate the inchoate nature of the approach being developed by Harper and others at the time, which saw risks in embracing legalistic tools and an orientation towards individual victimhood. The promise of liberation and the churches' pervasive role in society were ecumenical Christians' trump cards. Yet the concept of human rights was not discarded on this account; rather, it would have to be either used pragmatically or reconfigured to serve the purpose of liberation.

A document setting out a 'provisional typology of human rights violations in Latin America' illustrated the continuing importance of social and economic rights in the mind of the international ecumenical network at this time. This document was initially prepared at an ecumenical meeting in Lima, Peru, from 18 July to 1 August 1974. Participants included Brazilians, Chileans, and Uruguayans. Chile's Pro-Peace Committee was held up as an example of ecumenical cooperation.<sup>695</sup> The analysis (now marked only as crafted by 'Latin American Christians') was subsequently included in the preparatory materials for the St. Pölten consultation. The categories of the 'typology', which sought to provide a systematic overview of rights violations across Latin America, were not only '[p]olitical and legal repression' but also '[e]conomic repression', '[i]deological and cultural repression', and '[r]eligious repression'. All four of these categories of violations were found to be endemic in the nineteen countries catalogued, with countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, and Uruguay featuring the most intense concentration. 'Economic repression' was subdivided into that 'against individuals' – including '[s]uspension and dismissal of victims, their relatives and friends' or '[c]onfiscation of property' – and that 'against social groups' – such as '[c]learance of lands occupied by farmers subject to political persecution' or '[o]bstacles to all forms of trade union, corporative, professional, etc. associations'.<sup>696</sup>

The accompanying analysis subscribed to an emphatically systematic view of the problem:

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<sup>693</sup> Translation mine. Charles Harper's notebook on 'July 1974 1: Panama, Costa Rica, Mexico + Perú mini consult', 61-63, WCCA box marked 'Travel Notes WCC – HRROLA, South & Central America, 1974-1990 I'.

<sup>694</sup> Charles Harper's notebook on '1974 2: Costa Rica, Chile', 6, WCCA box marked 'Travel Notes WCC – HRROLA, South & Central America, 1974-1990 I'.

<sup>695</sup> No author, 'Memorandum' (on Lima consultation, 18 July – 1 August 1974), n.d. [1974], 2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.1.4-6.

<sup>696</sup> No author, 'A Provisional Typology of Human Rights Violations in Latin America and Action Strategies for Combatting Repression', in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, 2 (WCC: Geneva, 1974) 40-51, on 42.

‘Repression in the various Latin American countries is a massive, systematic, scientific and highly technical apparatus which is regarded by its users as the most inflexible way of maintaining the imperialist system, now menaced by the oppressed sectors as they come to realize the fact of oppression and begin to organize.’

In line with this, its authors rejected a humanitarian approach from outside actors: ‘Repression cannot be considered as a fact or facts in isolation, to which the response should be a condescending attitude of paternalism or compassion. Repression is a political fact.’<sup>697</sup> Beyond the commitment to identifying a range of individual rights violations, the group put forward a conception of the collective rights of the Latin American ‘peoples’: ‘Among the fundamental human rights, the first and all-embracing as regards the subjected peoples of Latin America is the inalienable right to full liberty, economic, juridical and political, and cultural.’<sup>698</sup> Conceptions of collective, social and economic rights thus continued to animate Latin American Christians even as the situation in countries like Chile made it difficult to practice resistance in ways that effectively incorporated these elements.

Under the influence of Latin American participants, the WCC’s St. Pölten consultation on ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, discussed in the next chapter, articulated an ambitious set of social, economic, and collective rights, an enumeration which was adopted by the WCC’s 1975 Nairobi Assembly. That Assembly’s report on ‘Human Rights in Latin America’ drew attention to the fact that of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration, ‘the fundamental rights to health, education, work, and a living wage have been either ignored completely or not sufficiently implemented by the majority of the governments’. It then moved on to a list of civil and political rights which were being violated, as well as the rights of (political) refugees and exiles.<sup>699</sup> This sequence should be understood in light of the analysis in terms of root causes and symptoms put forward in the section’s general report on human rights. In this analysis, civil and political rights violations were conceived of as primarily a symptom of the underlying systemic problem of the denial of social and economic rights and self-determination. But in order to address these systemic issues, political change was required.

In order to alleviate and remedy the situation, the report called on the governments of Latin America, and specifically those of Chile and Argentina (at a Brazilian delegate’s request, it was decided not to mention Brazil, since it was feared this would cause a backlash), to comply with the Universal

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<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>699</sup> David M. Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975* (London and Grand Rapids: SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans) 178.

Declaration and to improve their handling of refugees. Furthermore, the report commended the work of the CCIA and HRROLA and called on Latin American churches to ‘educate and conscientize their members’ to defend human rights, and to ‘create ecumenical commissions of churches to promote respect for human rights in their countries’ (no doubt with Chile’s Pro-Peace Committee in mind, though that organization was just then being shut down and replaced with the Vicariate of Solidarity).<sup>700</sup> Churches in the West would also have to do their bit, however, by recognizing the responsibility their societies bore for the situation in Latin America. A 1978 HRROLA report relayed that Latin American Christians had urged the WCC to mobilize its network ‘to challenge, the *deeper institutionalised forms of political, military and economic structures* whose power base and control are located in these churches’ [in other regions] societies’, so that ultimately they might begin ‘the difficult task of countering these forces on which the disproportionate prosperity of many of our societies depends’.<sup>701</sup> Human rights advocacy was thus connected to or entangled in a structural critique that stretched beyond individual Latin American countries to identify the responsibility of the wealthy countries of the West.

As Kelly and others have argued, over the course of the 1970s and into the 1980s, the discourse of human rights as such tended towards a narrow focus on individual civil and political rights, epitomized by Amnesty’s ‘impartial’ or politically ‘neutral’ approach.<sup>702</sup> Despite the above-mentioned desire on the part of the WCC to maintain a broader view, in the WCC’s stance on the international level, a tendency in this direction seems discernable – though a full assessment of this question goes beyond the present study’s scope. The focus on civil and political rights in the UN’s treatment of Latin American dictatorships no doubt pulled in this direction, as did the narrowing of the agenda of the churches in the countries themselves. An emphasis on civil and political rights could also be explained from the fact that the content of the WCC’s human rights work remained contested after Nairobi, and this was especially true of the new emphasis on structures. In contrast, civil and political rights, especially torture, could count on much greater consensus as ecumenical priorities. This tension was made explicit in the WCC Central Committee’s 1977 ‘Statement on Torture’, in report to what its moderator called ‘a steady increase in reports of violation of human rights, and in the use of torture in an increasing number of countries of the world’.<sup>703</sup> The statement read:

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<sup>700</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>701</sup> ‘Report of the Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America (Programme Unit on Justice and Service) to The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, August 20-26, 1978 – Geneva’, 4, WCCA HRROLA 429.02.02.

<sup>702</sup> Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, Moyn, *Last Utopia*, Markarian, *Left in Transformation*.

<sup>703</sup> Quoted in CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1974-1978* (Geneva: WCC, 1979) 39.



‘Torture is endemic, breeds in the dark, in silence. We call upon the churches to bring its existence into the open, to break the silence, to reveal the persons and structures of our societies which are responsible for this most dehumanizing of all violations of human rights.’

It went on to concede ‘that there remain, even among the churches, certain differences of interpretation of human rights (...) But on the point of torture there can be no difference of opinion. The churches together can and must become major forces for the abolition of torture.’<sup>704</sup> Subsequent statements similarly focused on questions of civil and political rights, such as a 1980 statement by Harper to the UN Commission on Human Rights on ‘the question of missing and disappeared persons’ and the Central Committee’s 1982 adoption of a ‘Statement on Extrajudicial Executions’.<sup>705</sup> Nevertheless, the structural problems facing Latin America continued to inform the WCC’s efforts at promoting proposals for a New International Economic Order or a Right to Development and similar collective rights. They also informed the WCC’s consciousness-raising among Western church constituencies in fields such as development and mission.<sup>706</sup> These attempts at reworking human rights into a widely-ranging agenda for social justice are discussed fully in the next chapter.

## Conclusions

The ecumenical response to repression in Latin America described in this chapter was the crucible in which the WCC’s conception of human rights was expanded reworked into one rooted in liberation theology. While liberation theologians were initially indifferent or suspicious towards the concept of human rights, ecumenical meetings helped to convince them of not only its pragmatic utility but its value as a moral principle. At the same time, they remained aware of some of its limitations, and conceived of it as part of a Christian social ethics rather than its starting point. The WCC and its interlocutors were ambivalent, however, as to whether social, economic, and collective concerns could effectively be framed as rights. As Engler has written, this is a question that has persisted: ‘[a]lthough the assertion of a broad range of system-oriented, second and third-generation rights is an innovative strategy for challenging the limits of traditional liberal conceptions of human rights, it remains uncertain whether the category of “rights” can bear the burden of this move’.<sup>707</sup> In a juridical sense, enforcement of such rights remained a distant prospect. Similarly, enforcement of the

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<sup>704</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>705</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1979-1982* (Geneva: WCC, 1983) 62.

<sup>706</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1974-1978* (Geneva: WCC, 1979) 46.

<sup>707</sup> Engler, “Rights of the Poor”, 357-358.

rights of peoples remained utopian, notwithstanding the WCC's efforts at pursuing international economic change. This helps explain the scarcity of appeals to these rights in legalistic terms.

But in a moral key, they could still play an important role: the WCC and its allies drew attention to social and economic inequality and marginalization not to provoke legalistic investigations, but to generate moral outrage and pressure for structural change. Such usage also allowed for the creative refashioning of rights as tools that emphasized popular agency, particularly on the part of Latin Americans who wished to 'conscientize' the continent's poor and oppressed. The WCC's financial support, and its function as a hub that connected Latin American Christians and mobilized Western churches, meant more than the denunciations of human rights violations it issued at the UN and elsewhere. As the CCIA's Executive Secretary Erich Weingärtner observed with regard to Chile, looking back in 1983, the WCC had exercised 'considerable restraint' in speaking out publicly. 'This is due to the fact that it was felt much more important to support the life and witness of the churches of Chile, which ultimately has been proven to be far more effective for the promotion of human rights than making a political point by means of a statement.'<sup>708</sup>

What stands out across this story is the contested and fluid nature of human rights in this context. As the most salient case, it is tempting to view Chile as the place where human rights activism came, as it were, into its own. But as the February 1973 Puerto Rico consultation shows most clearly, efforts at developing a transnational ecumenical network advocating for human rights were already taking shape before Chile's September coup. This should serve as a caution against overemphasizing the decisive role of activism with regard to that country. Nevertheless, the case of Chile triggered a sharp increase in outside involvement, including that of the WCC. Moreover, COPACHI's ecumenical directorate, even if its successor organization, the Vicariate, could not carry this on, marked the Chilean churches' engagement out as an ecumenical exemplar – cooperation between denominations was far from a given, even in the face of repression. In these and other respects, there remains ample scope for research into variance across countries, as Jorge González-Jácome's recent work on the case of Colombia also suggests.<sup>709</sup> In the initial years of the churches' response to repression in Chile, socioeconomic engagement seems to have played a greater role than subsequently, certainly with regard to efforts at mobilizing international support. But even if political repression, combined with foreign actors' preoccupation with civil and political rights, whittled human rights discourse down to

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<sup>708</sup> Erich Weingärtner, *Human Rights on the Ecumenical Agenda: Report and Assessment* (Geneva: WCC, 1983) 60.

<sup>709</sup> Jorge González-Jácome, 'The Emergence of Revolutionary and Democratic Rights Activism in Colombia Between 1974 and 1980', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 40, 1 (2018) 91-118.

a ‘depoliticized’ core of minimal demands, ecumenical deliberations between the WCC and its Latin American interlocutors – as well as the liberation theologians discussed by Engler – continued to aim at removing what they saw as the root causes of oppression. As the next chapter shows, this entailed a continued attempt to give ‘a new content’ to the concept of human rights.

## 6. Remaking human rights: the St. Pölten consultation on ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’ (1974)

‘Human rights are a political matter, like every attempt of man to realize the human potential with which the Creator endowed him.’<sup>710</sup> Dwain Epps, 1974

‘The key problem is that the human rights movement by definition tends towards the enforcement of a consensus, and hence can enter the conflicts involved in the arduous process of enlarging the consensus only at the risk of negating itself.’<sup>711</sup> José Zalaquett, 1981

### Introduction

Over the course of the early 1970s, the World Council of Churches (WCC) developed a new approach to human rights, marking a major discontinuity with its efforts since the 1940s. Whereas the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) had thus far focused heavily on freedom of religion and associated rights, it would now promote a much more wide-ranging agenda. Religious freedom was demoted to one right among others; as the WCC’s Executive Committee would put it in 1979, ‘if it speaks in universal terms, the church cannot isolate for priority consideration the question of its own religious freedom. Conversely, a church which struggles for all rights for all people has, often with surprise, rediscovered something of its essential evangelical mission.’<sup>712</sup> The previous chapter has described how the ecumenical response to the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America invited such a widening of the WCC’s human rights agenda. But at the same time, the WCC, and especially the CCIA, embarked on a process of reflection and consultation that sought to articulate a new ecumenical conception of human rights, which would be applicable across the ecumenical movement while reckoning with its increasing diversity, especially in terms of the ascendancy of Third World churches. While Latin American perspectives played a key role in this process, the aspiration

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<sup>710</sup> ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Human Rights Basic Program Paper’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 1 (Geneva: WCC, 1974) 5-12, on 5.

<sup>711</sup> José Zalaquett, ‘The human rights issue and the human rights movement: characterization, evaluation, propositions’, *CCIA Background Information*, no. 3 (1981) 41.

<sup>712</sup> Quoted in Ans J. van der Bent, *Christian Response in a World of Crisis: A Brief History of the WCC’s Commission of the Churches on International Affairs* (Geneva: WCC, 1986) 29.

of developing a general ecumenical approach to human rights meant that it engaged with a variety of viewpoints, most vividly so at the 1974 St. Pölten consultation on 'Human Rights and Christian Responsibility'. The results of this consultation were then endorsed by the WCC's 1975 Nairobi Assembly, and served as the basis for the ecumenical human rights agenda in the decades to come.

This outcome would remain controversial, however, especially among the WCC's Western constituency, and it arguably papered over differences as much as it resolved them. In the view of those driving the process, however, such an outcome was acceptable, as the inevitable product of pushing the churches to embrace a political, pluralistic, and liberationist conception of human rights that focused on the problems facing the global South. The CCIA's staff in this sense represented the ecumenical 'revolutionary' tradition, in which process mattered more than the achievement of a consensus outcome.<sup>713</sup> Rather than attempting to identify issues from a putatively neutral or universal standpoint, priority was given to understanding divergent viewpoints. This was not only seen as a precondition for meaningful practical engagement but was also necessary as the basis for any true ecumenical fellowship. Shifting notions of ecumenical unity and mission over time enabled this reorientation: unity could be manifested in diversity, at least in theory, and mission should be conceived of as global rather than directed from the West to Third World mission fields. Thus, in his address to the Nairobi Assembly, the WCC's new General Secretary, Philip Potter, from the British-associated Caribbean state of Dominica, reiterated a statement agreed by the 1973 Bangkok World Mission Conference: 'the diversity of responses to Christ is essential precisely because they are related to particular situations and are thus relevant and complementary'.<sup>714</sup> But at the same time, the WCC's new approach to human rights was not merely a moral menu from which the churches could pick and choose. Through a process of consultation, the CCIA developed an approach to human rights that was liberationist and oriented toward social justice, and it pushed member churches to act on this. Its approach was sceptical towards liberalism, antagonistic towards capitalism, and sympathetic towards Third World Marxism and anti-imperialism. Building on Christian Albers' excellent account of the process by which this approach was arrived at, this chapter draws on a wider range of published and

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<sup>713</sup> Justin Reynolds, 'Against the World: International Protestantism and the Ecumenical Movement between Secularization and Politics' (PhD dissertation: Columbia University, 2016) ch. 6.

<sup>714</sup> David M. Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975* (London and Grand Rapids: SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans) 251.

archival sources to provide a more in-depth and contextualized analysis of the WCC's new approach.<sup>715</sup> The chapter's structure is straightforward: the first section covers the ecumenical meetings leading up to the St. Pölten consultation; the second section describes the consultation itself; and the third sketches the WCC's human rights agenda from the Nairobi Assembly onward.

## The road to St. Pölten, 1971-1974

With the retirement of key figures such as O. Frederick Nolde and Kenneth G. Grubb in 1968, representatives of the 'revolutionary' tradition obtained positions of power in the WCC, enabling them – acting on the mandate provided by the 1968 Uppsala Assembly – to effect a change in many of its policies, including on human rights. A key figure in this regard was Leopoldo Niilus, CCIA Director from 1969 to July 1981. Niilus was born in Estonia, but his parents and he had fled the country in 1944, staying in Sweden as refugees before moving to Argentina while Niilus was still in secondary school. He then took his education in law at Buenos Aires, and a Master's in Comparative Law at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.<sup>716</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Niilus became a leader of the leftist network Church and Society in Latin America (*Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina*, ISAL). In 1969, he was exiled from Argentina and travelled to Geneva, where he was put forward – at the young age of 35 – as the new Director of the CCIA, taking over from the renowned O. Frederick Nolde. This appointment was not without obstacles: as someone born in Estonia, Eastern bloc church representatives saw his appointment as an affront to the Soviet Union and delayed his appointment, while others saw him as not truly of the Third World. The 'old guard' of the CCIA, such as its London representative Alan Booth, mistrusted him for his radicalism. (Annegreth Schilling points out that Niilus's thinking drew on Marxist authors ranging from Karl Marx to Che Guevara and Herbert Marcuse.)<sup>717</sup> Consequently, Niilus was initially appointed on a very close vote for a 2-year probationary period. As Schilling writes, Niilus would work to make the CCIA, 'in Christian responsibility, live up to its vocation and advocate for people on the margins of society, give voice to

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<sup>715</sup> Christian Albers, 'Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte im Kontext von Kaltem Krieg und Dekolonisierung', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 189-215. For Albers' theologically-grounded analysis of these issues, see his forthcoming PhD dissertation.

<sup>716</sup> Hielke Wolters, 'Leopoldo J. Niilus', 10 February 2015, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/tributes/leopoldo-j-niilus> (accessed 5 August 2018).

<sup>717</sup> Annegreth Schilling, *Revolution, Exil und Befreiung: Der Boom des lateinamerikanischen Protestantismus in der internationalen Ökumene in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) 197.

the weak and the oppressed, and thereby sensitize them to God's freedom'. Furthermore, he moved to make the CCIA less the sole representative of the ecumenical movement in international affairs and more of a coordinating body between various organs of the WCC.<sup>718</sup>

Despite Niilus' role, however, his appointed study secretary, the young American Presbyterian Reverend Dwain C. Epps, did most of the work in guiding along the CCIA's process of study on human rights. The relative sparseness of Niilus' written legacy in this area makes it difficult to ascertain how much freedom Epps had in this respect, but although the two clearly worked together closely, Epps' own contribution should not be disregarded.<sup>719</sup> Epps, originally from Oregon, had through student Christian networks become acquainted with members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and through the Reserve Officer Training Corps lived and worked in Mississippi from 1960 to 1963, before attending seminary in San Francisco. Later, he went on a student exchange to Tübingen, Germany, where he became acquainted with the ecumenical movement and ended up attending the WCC's seminal 1966 Geneva conference. Julio de Santa Ana made a particular impression on him as a speaker there, as Epps recalled, and he took an interest in the 'issues of the day' – revolution, decolonization, and liberation. Epps then took up a Frontier Internship in Buenos Aires, where he focused on developing regional urban mission networks under Niilus' leadership at ISAL.<sup>720</sup> On Niilus' departure to Geneva, Epps was asked to join him there to work for the CCIA, where he would go on to organize the St. Pölten consultation. (Significantly, Epps also rapidly gained clout as a non-governmental organizer at the UN: he soon became the Vice President of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN).<sup>721</sup>

Beyond Niilus and Epps, the 1972 appointment of Potter as General Secretary was significant. The contours of the CCIA's development of a new conception of human rights were taking shape well before Potter took up his position. But Potter's thinking about human rights was consonant with that of the CCIA, and as General Secretary he promoted the new approach.<sup>722</sup> Similarly, the CCIA benefited from a supportive stance on the part of the new Moderator of the Central Committee (1968-

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<sup>718</sup> Translation mine. Ibid., 198-199.

<sup>719</sup> Cf. Dwain C. Epps, 'Remembering Leopoldo Niilus', 16 February 2015, WCCA CCIA 428.10.6.

<sup>720</sup> Epps was interviewed as part of the research for Ada J. Focer, 'Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974: Young Christians Abroad in a Post-Colonial and Cold War World' (PhD dissertation: Boston University, 2016).

<sup>721</sup> Dwain C. Epps, interview with the author at Montbovon, Switzerland, 22 July 2016.

<sup>722</sup> On Potter's views on human rights, see Michael N. Jagessar, *Full Life for All: The Work and Theology of Philip A. Potter: A Historical Survey and Systematic Analysis of Major Themes* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1997) 269-271.

1975), the Indian theologian M.M. Thomas. Thomas, like Potter, had been associated with the ecumenical movement from the 1940s onward, but the need for development in the Third World had made him critical of liberal conceptions of human rights.<sup>723</sup> He was thus an important ally in the push to expand human rights to reflect Third World concerns.

According to Epps, it was Niilus and the Liberian Canon Burgess Carr, the General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches and a former WCC staff member, who in January 1971 initiated the process of redefining the WCC's conception of human rights.<sup>724</sup> The precise reasons for this are not entirely clear. Carr had joined the WCC after breaking off his PhD at Harvard University, because he had been appalled by images from the civil war in the Congo. According to his later account, this also underlay his desire to raise the question of human rights.<sup>725</sup> Joseph Rudolph Grimes, who had served as Liberia's Foreign Minister until 1971 and would subsequently join the CCIA, later remarked that the opportunity presented by the impending 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration had played a role.<sup>726</sup> For Niilus' part, a speech given at the 1970 Conference of Secretaries of World Confessional Organizations, on religious freedom and human rights, gave an indication of his views at the time. The new director of the CCIA observed a 'dramatic' rise in violations of human rights, all over the world. Referencing South Africa, Niilus asked, rhetorically: 'isn't there also a lack of real religious freedom where large numbers of people are being oppressed, starved, dominated, as we are then truly hindered from doing what we are mandated to do, namely to communicate the Good News to *all* men and the *whole* man?'<sup>727</sup> Niilus thus pushed for a conception of religious freedom as being safeguarded when not only civil and political but also social, economic and cultural rights were respected.<sup>728</sup> In doing so, he engaged in a precarious dance with the Universal Declaration: on the one hand, he continually invoked its clauses, especially less-referenced ones suggesting, among other things, a right to rebellion against a regime that violates human rights, and called for their implementation, while on the other, he drew attention to the Declaration's historical nature as a

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<sup>723</sup> M.M. Thomas, 'Awakened Peoples, Developing Nations and the Dynamics of World Politics', in Z.K. Matthews, ed., *Responsible Government in a Revolutionary Age* (Geneva: WCC, 1966) 27-46, especially 42. On Thomas more generally, see Justin Reynolds, 'From Christian Anti-Imperialism to Postcolonial Christianity: M.M. Thomas and the Ecumenical Theology of Communism in the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of Global History*, 13, 2 (2018) 230-251.

<sup>724</sup> Epps to Burgess Carr, 11 April 1973, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.2.

<sup>725</sup> Burgess Carr, 'Biblical and Theological Basis for the Struggle for Human Rights', *The Ecumenical Review*, 27, 2 (1975) 117-123, on 118.

<sup>726</sup> J. Rudolph Grimes, 'The Chairman's Opening Speech', in 'The Churches and Human Rights in Africa', *CCLA Background Information*, 2 (1975) 10-11, on 10.

<sup>727</sup> Leopoldo J. Niilus, 'Religious Liberty and Human Rights', *Reformed World*, 18, 5 (1971) 195-202, quote on 200.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.



‘political document reflecting the ideological slants and doctrines of its times and drafters’ that should therefore be regarded critically.<sup>729</sup>

Ahead of the WCC Central Committee’s 1971 meeting in Addis Ababa, the CCIA submitted a ‘Memorandum on Human Rights’ and a statement on ‘Unity and Human Rights in Africa Today’, both of which were adopted. The ‘Memorandum’ focused attention on the need to implement human rights standards as established at the UN and by regional bodies in Europe (the Council of Europe), Latin America (the Inter-American Commission), the Middle East (the League of Arab States), and Africa (the Organization for African Unity). The memorandum noted that efforts at developing UN instruments for implementation had so far been confined to the area of discrimination, e.g. the UN Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, whereas elsewhere ‘most, yes almost everything, remains to be done’ (for more on the question of racial discrimination, the WCC, and the UN, see chapter 4).<sup>730</sup> The memorandum ended by calling the UN the ‘natural international agency for advancing these rights’, which the churches should support, while it approvingly quoted Secretary-General U Thant, who had at a recent conference stated that ‘[t]he United Nations... cannot progress, or even survive, without enforceable world laws, world police, and world courts for the maintenance of international peace and security.’<sup>731</sup> The memorandum thus evinced an idealistic and UN-centric vision of international implementation of human rights. Perhaps most importantly, in the resolution that adopted the memorandum, the Central Committee called for the CCIA to initiate a consultation ‘to focus member churches’ concern on Human Rights’ – this would eventually result in the St. Pölten consultation of 1974.<sup>732</sup>

The statement on ‘Unity and Human Rights in Africa Today’ warned of the combined effect of (the history of) colonialism and “‘neo-colonialism” in the form of foreign interference, which ‘makes the solution of the existing problems of tribalism and internal dissidence more difficult’. The statement endorsed the Organization of African Unity’s concept of ‘national, regional and continental unity’, though, as per its Charter, with “‘due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights””. This quest for ‘unity and self-determination in Africa’ was ‘impeded’, however, ‘not only by the legacies of the colonial epoch, but also by the interference of the rich and powerful nations in the affairs of Africa’. The document warned that ‘[u]nity is not an end in

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<sup>729</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>730</sup> WCC, Minutes and Records of the Central Committee (hereafter MRCC) 1971, 270.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid., 272 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., 69.

itself. National unity must include a recognition of legitimate human rights which also safeguard the basic rights of ethnic minorities.<sup>733</sup> But the specific areas in which the statement called for the support of the WCC's member churches aimed at assisting African nations in attaining and preserving 'their full self-determination, independence, and unity', including pressuring governments and corporations to cease selling arms to white-minority regimes, 'giving support and encouragement to foreign mercenaries', and executing projects that 'entrench racist and colonial majority regimes in Africa'.<sup>734</sup> While relatively vague, the statement thus connected human rights to the collective right of self-determination and freedom from foreign interference, while implicitly detracting from the stature of individual rights.

After this opening salvo of two somewhat divergent statements, the CCIA's deliberations on human rights got underway in earnest. Its 9-12 July 1971 Executive Committee meeting put human rights center stage and featured extensive discussion. The first of its two keynote speakers was Marc Schreiber, head of the UN Human Rights Division, who asserted that the 'basic task of those concerned with human rights is to promote respect for human values' and stressed the importance of implementing human rights by ratifying the UN Covenants. The more significant presentation, however, was made by the Colombian CCIA Commissioner and sociologist Professor Orlando Fals Borda, who spoke 'from the standpoint of the underdeveloped part of the world'.<sup>735</sup> Fals Borda, a Presbyterian, had been a close friend and associate of Father Camillo Torres Restrepo, an important predecessor of liberation theology who was killed while fighting for the guerrillas of Colombia's National Liberation Army in 1966 (Fals Borda, on the other hand, limited himself to nonviolent activism).

In his presentation, Fals Borda denounced human rights as 'basically the product of a Western, capitalistic, monopolistic economic system which tends to exploit and control the human and material resources of the Third World', which went hand in hand with notions of 'nation-building' and 'modernization'. Human rights failed to represent 'opposing views representing traditional cultures and the needs of the exploited poor', as voiced by leaders like 'Tupac Amaru, (...) Patrice Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Tse Tung, "Che" Guevara and Eduardo Mondlane'. Against the Western emphasis on individual rights, which mostly benefited 'the powerful and the rich', Fals Borda proposed a new emphasis on the '*rights of peoples*', most importantly the '*right to rebel for justice*', that is, against unjust laws,

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<sup>733</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>735</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1970-1973* (Geneva: WCC, 1974) 88 (emphasis omitted).

and the ‘*right to cultural self-determination*’. Fals Borda argued that a kind of ‘*nationalism*’ was called for, in which the ‘nation is conceived of not exclusively as a political system, but as a human, cultural entity as well’, which ought to be entirely free from any kind of foreign interference.<sup>736</sup> While Fals Borda’s conception of foreign interference was focused on exploitative behavior by Western governments and corporations, his view of human rights as their handmaiden clearly sat at odds with the ideal of internationally enforced human rights.

Fals Borda’s approach was supported by a draft document that was presented to, though not formally adopted by, the meeting, and which shared his emphasis on moving from individual to collective rights:

‘The CCIA should consistently interpret “human rights” in light of the Christian conception of the relation of God and man and the brotherhood of all men as sons of God. This conception will necessarily move beyond the Western liberal interpretation that views individual rights as supreme, to give emphasis to collective rights of all men to act in pursuit of dignity free from exploitation by their fellow-men whether this exploitation is political or economic in character. (...) In many parts of the world, individual human rights may be attained only if there is group action to change the social structures that limit those rights.’<sup>737</sup>

Fals Borda’s presentation also received warm support from the Ghanaian CCIA Commissioner A.L. Adu, who argued that similar maxims applied to Africa, ‘with its communal traditions’, and specifically to Ghana, the constitution of which ‘is a mere repetition of Western rhetoric and practically ignores indigenous traditions’, due to the history of foreign exploitation and the present state of ‘neocolonialism’.<sup>738</sup> (Adu had served first as Secretary for External Affairs and then Secretary to the Cabinet under Kwame Nkrumah, where he had been a rival to George Padmore, Nkrumah’s key advisor on ‘African Affairs’.<sup>739</sup> After the 1966 coup, Adu went on to become the Commonwealth of Nations’ first Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs, serving from 1966 to 1970, before returning to Ghana as director of Ghana Consolidated Diamonds Limited.<sup>740</sup>)

Western commissioners, on the other hand, were by and large critical of Fals Borda’s presentation, calling for attention to women’s rights as well as religious freedom in ‘societies which explicitly deny the Christian faith’, for further reflection on what might justify rebellion, and for the

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<sup>736</sup> Ibid., 89-92.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., 78-79. The drafting process of this document is not clear from the source itself or adjacent documents in the archives.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>739</sup> Matteo Grilli, ‘African Liberation and Unity in Nkrumah’s Ghana: A Study of the Role of “Pan-African Institutions” in the Making of Ghana’s foreign policy, 1957–1966’ (PhD dissertation: Leiden University, 2015) 24-25.

<sup>740</sup> Mark R. Lipschutz and R. Kent Rasmussen, *Dictionary of African Historical Biography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1989; 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1978) 258.

need to learn from the Western experience in facing the challenges associated with ‘moving from traditional to modern society’. Nevertheless, the author of the last two of these points, the British CCIA Commissioner Geoffrey Goodwin, an emeritus professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, conceded that in countries like Nigeria, Pakistan and the Sudan, ‘Western inspired ideas of nation-building and integration’ had trumped ‘[m]inority group rights’, with disastrous consequences. In relation to the question of dealing with human rights globally or regionally, he acknowledged that a regional approach, ‘where a greater degree of cultural, theological and political homogeneity exists to simplify matters’, could be fruitful, and pointed to the International Labor Organization (ILO) as a possible example.<sup>741</sup> Most participants resisted Fals Borda’s radicalism and especially his disdain for individual human rights to some degree or another. Nevertheless, during the meeting’s subsequent presentations and discussions, perspectives suggesting that human rights needed to be not only implemented but also reformed in some way, based on a sense that the Western, liberal tradition of human rights was limited or outdated, were ascendant. The British Canon David Jenkins, who had prepared a paper on the theology of human rights, argued that ‘one particular area with regard to human rights will be to concentrate with particular intensity and sensitivity on *the oppression of the poor*’.<sup>742</sup> Though there existed a range of views as to both problems and potential solutions, the discussion had opened up space for a fundamental reconsideration of the meaning of human rights.

At the 13-23 August 1972 Utrecht Central Committee meeting, the CCIA presented a new ‘Report and Further Recommendations on Human Rights’, which was unanimously adopted. The report stressed, as had the 1971 report, the need for implementation of existing international standards. But it added a second area of concern: the question of ‘how to relate the provisions of existing international instruments for the protection of Human Rights to the struggle for social and economic justice and other fundamental rights often ignored even by governments which have formally accepted the duty of safeguarding them’.<sup>743</sup> The Central Committee adopted the consequent CCIA recommendation to establish a specific theme for the consultation on human rights that the Addis Ababa meeting had called for, namely: ‘how to relate standards of Human Rights to the cultural, socio-economic and political settings of different parts of the world, attention being given to religious liberty as a basic right, and emphasis being laid on finding more effective means of international

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<sup>741</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1970-1973* (Geneva: WCC, 1974) 91-93.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>743</sup> CCIA, ‘Report and Further Recommendations on Human Rights’, 1972, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.04.15.2.

cooperation for the implementation of Human Rights’.<sup>744</sup> Based on this mandate, the CCIA set about organizing its consultation on ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, which would take place, after a series of meetings organized by a steering group, in October 1974.

## The St. Pölten consultation on ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, 21-26 October 1974

### *The consultation’s intent*

From 21 to 26 October 1974, the CCIA brought together a group of 50 clergy and laymen in St. Pölten, Austria, to discuss the subject of ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’. This represented a major step in the process whereby the WCC sought to articulate its position and policy on human rights. The WCC press release after the consultation listed six basic rights: ‘the essential human right to life, the right to enjoy and maintain cultural identity, the right to participate in decision-making within the community, the right to dissent, the right to personal dignity, which includes protection from torture and the right to religious liberty’.<sup>745</sup> This list was taken, with minor modifications, from the consultation’s report as it would be presented to the Nairobi Assembly.<sup>746</sup> The Assembly would endorse these in virtually unchanged form, as discussed in the next section, thereby enshrining them as the core of the WCC’s human rights engagement moving forward.

The consultation’s participants hailed from seven regions, as defined by the organizers (the number of participants from each area follows in brackets): Latin America (7), Asia (4), Africa (3), the Middle East (2), North America (5), Western Europe (18), Eastern Europe (9), and the Pacific Region (2). These numbers reflected a much stronger Western European representation than the organizers had envisioned: six places taken by Western Europeans had originally been allotted to African (3), Asian (2), and Middle Eastern (1) participants, which in terms of ‘blocs’ would have made the Third

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>745</sup> WCC, ‘WCC Consultation Sets Human Rights Priorities’, 28 October 1974, 1; Archives of the Raad van Kerken in Nederland, het Utrechts Archief, inv. no. 310. Cf. Albers, ‘Die ÖRK’, 206.

<sup>746</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 3, Archives of Justitia et Pax Nederland, Katholiek Documentatie Centrum, Nijmegen (hereafter JP NL-KDC, inv. no. 63). This is the version of the report as submitted to member churches participating in the Nairobi Assembly; it represents a lightly edited version (with an introduction added) of the report as published earlier on, as CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1974).

World, rather than Western Europe or the wider West, the largest in numbers.<sup>747</sup> For unclear reasons, the Middle East, while recognized as a represented region at the consultation, was not represented in any of the conference's documents, nor was the Pacific Region. Apart from these participants, the consultation included seven WCC and five CCIA staff, as well as a few outside experts and observers from the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Vatican's Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace.

Ahead of the consultation, preparatory documents were compiled into two volumes, the first sent out in May 1974 and the second closer to the conference (at a relatively late time), as well as a few separately supplied documents. The image on the cover of the St. Pölten volumes, the same cartoon each time, drove home the central point the organizers wanted to make: a white man stands atop a pile of oppressed individuals, such as a laborer and a woman, apparently unaware of their existence and the burden he is placing on them; blinders block his view on either side while he gleefully looks through a telescope that reads 'human rights violations abroad' and points at the other countries (outside the frame) in question. The message was clear: Western churches should spend less time pointing out the splinter in the eye of others and more time examining their own responsibility for injustice.

The WCC's archives contain no minutes of the consultation's discussions; instead, keynote speeches and working group reports were compiled into a final report. The working groups' reports were later sent on to the participants of the Nairobi Assembly, with a new introduction. While this compilation of outcome reports was highly significant in that it captured and disseminated the (limited) consensus that the consultation had arrived at, it blended together all the various viewpoints expressed during the consultation, without attributing any given viewpoint to any specific source. Nevertheless, the preparatory documents and keynote speeches provide a window into which currents of thinking shaped the eventual outcome, as well as which perspectives failed to influence it. First and foremost, however, attention must be given to the viewpoints of the organizers, who wielded great influence through their framing of the issues, their role in the selection of participants, and their compilation of the preparatory materials as well as the report.

A fundamental problem that the consultation grappled with was how the WCC, because of the diversity of its constituency, their viewpoints and the backgrounds they came from, could arrive

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<sup>747</sup> Minutes of the CCIA Human Rights Steering Committee Meeting, Geneva, 26-27 July 1974, 15, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.2.

at a form of consensus from which to advocate for human rights – most crucially, in cases when there was tension between different rights or ways of promoting them. This problem was captured in the conference’s above-quoted theme, which cast the problem in terms of global diversity: ‘how to relate standards of Human Rights to cultural, socio-economic and political settings of different parts of the world’.<sup>748</sup> Epps formulated the consultation’s objective in a more specific manner: ‘to develop an international ecumenical understanding on which effective relations of solidarity can be based to provide effective support to those in other countries who are struggling to defend and promote human rights in their own situations’.<sup>749</sup> As these quotations show, the consultation was premised on a degree of relativism, while at the same time organized around the assumption that a common understanding of ‘human rights’ could be arrived at.<sup>750</sup> This tension between the universal and the particular – a premise that challenged liberal assumptions about the universality of human rights – would have to be negotiated in practice.

In taking up this question, the consultation’s organizers conceived of the meeting as offering a corrective to the overly ‘Western’ perspective represented by the WCC’s existing stance. Thus, they aimed to showcase Third World perspectives prominently. In the view of the organizers, the new, ‘more integral approach’ to human rights required combating ‘root causes’: ‘human rights can be implemented only if threats to or open violations of them are opposed in terms of the socio-economic and political contexts in which they occur’.<sup>751</sup> Their programmatic paper related this ‘integral approach’ to the rise of ‘new social concerns as ecumenical priorities’: refugees, anti-racism, the ‘economic and social self-development of peoples’, and the need for a New International Economic Order (NIEO).<sup>752</sup> This conception of human rights thus moved beyond ‘simple charity, which may ease the conscience of the giver, yet brings no solution to the vast problem of inequality and often diverts attention from

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<sup>748</sup> Quoted in ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Human Rights Basic Program Paper’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 1 (1974) 5-12, quote on 7 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>749</sup> Dwain C. Epps, ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Further Perspectives’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 2 (1974) 1-2, quote on 2.

<sup>750</sup> Preparatory discussions at the end of 1973 made explicit some of these relativistic impulses, as when C.I. Itty, of the Syrian Orthodox Church of India, who served as Associate Executive Secretary of the WCC’s Department of Laity, argued ‘that the “rights” envisaged in the [Universal] Declaration did not seem appropriate for the younger nations of Asia. What counted far more was the social structure of society at the local level, and here one had to take into account Confucian ethics, Hindu and Buddhist elements etc’. ‘Asia Working Party: Memorandum of Week of Meetings, November 5 – 9, 1973’, 1-2, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.2.

<sup>751</sup> ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Human Rights Basic Program Paper’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 1 (1974) 5-12, 6 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

the real issues to symptoms’.<sup>753</sup> The organizers were well aware that this meant taking human rights into the territory of the ‘political’, and in fact they embraced this, stating that ‘both implementation and violation of human rights are political problems which have international political implications’, distancing themselves from the views of those who would ‘consider them as purely “humanitarian” and “apolitical”’.<sup>754</sup>

Epps’ writings in the lead-up to the consultation provide insight into the CCIA’s aims. In one memorandum, Epps posed the question: ‘Why place so much emphasis on human rights? They are not our “confession of faith”. Worse, they represent a liberal conception of the world which is today doing much more damage to the poor and the oppressed.’ Moreover, he continued, ‘there is no proof that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the UN itself is effective in implementing these “ideals”’. But, Epps wrote, the Universal Declaration being ‘historically determined’ meant it could also be given a new ‘interpretation according to the historical context of man’ as well as undergo ‘further development’ to correct its ‘individualism which does not correspond to the conception which many hold on the role of man in society’. Moreover, it was valuable because of ‘the very fact that an international code of human behaviour has been agreed upon in the midst of a vast plurality of views on what is the meaning of human existence and human dignity’. Epps explained that ‘[w]e take international human rights instruments as tools available to us for the reshaping of society and the structures of society in our attempts to remove the root causes of evil in the world.’ Given the authority such instruments enjoyed, the benefit was that ‘[w]e can talk in terms of human rights and be understood by even the most conservative of christians [sic]. If we leap immediately to other levels, we certainly will break communication with many.’<sup>755</sup> Epps’ fundamental goal was thus to use human rights as an entry point for dialogue while at the same time envisioning a drastic expansion of the concept’s meaning.

### *The consultation’s outcome*

At the start of the consultation, after the opening speeches, the participants were divided into four working groups, entitled ‘The Right to Life and Work: The Basic Social, Economic and Cultural

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<sup>753</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 18, JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>754</sup> ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Human Rights Basic Program Paper’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 1 (1974) 5-12, 6 and 9 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>755</sup> Dwain C. Epps, ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Where are we today?’, 10 January 1974, 4-5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.2.



Rights'; 'Right to Equality'; 'Rights to National Sovereignty, Self-Determination, International Community, and Related Rights'; and 'The Proliferation of Political Prisoners and of Political Refugees'. Across these four groups, there was an emphasis on collective rights, though the third group took care to point out that 'peoples' were not synonymous with 'nations and states': 'Peoples are continuous while nations and states may change.'<sup>756</sup> Even the fourth group, which focused on individual civil and political rights, sought the 'root causes' of human rights violations in changes in 'the relationships between the rich countries and poor countries': the 'rising level of consciousness among the oppressed' and their 'realization that systemic and structural change from an oppressive to a more just society is indeed within reach (...) directly threatens the privileges enjoyed by the national and international ruling few', who responded with 'internationally coordinated political, military and police instruments (...) to repress the voices of change'.<sup>757</sup> Common to the discussions was an analysis of the problem in terms of a developed North and an underdeveloped South, whereby the peoples of the South needed to be emancipated against the governments and corporations of the North and the Southern elites who were in thrall to them.

For the second phase of the consultation, the participants divided themselves into three new groups, the conclusions of which were accepted by the entire consultation as representative, 'with minor revisions, (...) of the consensus view of the whole'.<sup>758</sup> The paper discussed four specific issues of principle in relation to the consultation's main theme, which had been set out by the conference's organizers (Epps in particular): first, whether, generally speaking, collective or individual rights deserved emphasis; second, whether some situations permitted an emphasis on certain rights (at the cost of others); third, whether human rights should be promoted in a 'humanitarian' or a 'political' way; and fourth, whether all human rights should be affirmed by all political or economic systems. The report concluded, optimistically, that these 'questions raised are not so divisive as might at first appear'.<sup>759</sup>

In response to the first of these questions, on the relative importance of individual and collective rights, the report argued for the interrelatedness of the two, and asserted the social nature of rights and their correlative duties: 'Individual rights and collective rights are not in flat opposition. They are related. It should be the aim of the community to secure the welfare of all its members, the

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<sup>756</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 19-20, JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., iv.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., 2.

aim of the individual to serve the general good. In both instances, rights involve responsibilities.<sup>760</sup> On the second question, that of temporary suspension of certain rights, the group agreed ‘categorically that the limitation of human rights can never be justified when it is used as a device for oppression’, but allowed that further reflection was needed on the proposition that ‘in periods of fundamental economic and political change leading to a more just society there is an emphasis on those rights which are considered essential to promoting such change and in consequence a lesser emphasis on other rights’.<sup>761</sup> These formulations seemed to make civil and political rights negotiable, although their abstractness made it difficult to ascertain what this would mean in practice. It was not difficult to envision a state claiming it was not engaged in ‘oppression’ but in collective liberation with the aim of ‘a more just society’. Such tropes were part and parcel of the rhetoric of postcolonial dictatorships at the UN at this time, of which the CCIA could only have been aware.<sup>762</sup>

On the question of whether to promote human rights in a ‘humanitarian’ or a ‘political’ manner, the participants agreed that any intervention for human rights, whether intended to be humanitarian or political, would lead to a political result – calling into question the distinction between the humanitarian and the political in the first place, while recasting ‘political’ as a quality to be embraced or at least accepted rather than avoided.<sup>763</sup> Finally, on the fourth question, on whether all political systems ought to respect all human rights, the consultation stated simply that ‘though interpretations and emphases may vary’, all systems should respect the rights listed in the Universal Declaration: ‘We recognized that we were considering the order of priorities in specific situations, not setting alternatives in irreconcilable opposition.’<sup>764</sup> (In a follow-up document of the CCIA, this last answer was highlighted as the key one on the issue of different approaches to human rights.<sup>765</sup>) The document presented no clear rationale, however, for why civil and political should stand in tension with other rights in the first place. The counterpoint to this assumption had been made in a contribution by Martin Ennals, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, who stated that

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<sup>760</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>762</sup> On this subject see Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) and his subsequent articles, e.g. Roland Burke, ‘The Rites of Human Rights at the United Nations’, *Humanity*, 9, 1 (2018) 127-142; Roland Burke, ‘Some Rights Are More Equal Than Others: The Third World and the Transformation of Social and Economic Rights’, *Humanity*, 3, 3 (2012) 427-448.

<sup>763</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 2-3. JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>764</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>765</sup> Dwain C. Epps, ‘The continuing role of CCIA in the field of human rights’, 27 January 1975, 5, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.4.

[h]uman rights are not selective. (...) The mere attempt to set the two corpuses of rights in confrontation is in contradiction to the [Universal] Declaration and implies an insensitivity to the nature of what human rights are all about. (...) unless he [a starving man] has the right to speak freely and to organise, he may never be in a position to be able to ensure a steady diet and a protected house.<sup>766</sup>

Beyond these four positions, the report presented the list of six core rights presented above as common ground. It also argued that the WCC's nature made it especially suited to the task of coming up with a pluralistic approach to human rights.<sup>767</sup> The report confidently asserted that the WCC's ecumenical practice over several decades and its internal diversity – religiously, economically, politically, culturally – ‘have made the WCC in the best sense of the word impartial, not identified with any particular culture or political system, and therefore able to move into critical international situations’.<sup>768</sup> The CCIA thus saw the WCC as in the position to lead the global effort of the churches on human rights.

The assertion of the WCC's impartiality sat at odds, however, with the consultation's understanding of human rights as political, and the Marxist and anti-colonial or anti-imperialist thinking that shaped much of its outcome. It would be misleading to suggest that the participants were aligned with the foreign policy of the socialist states of the Eastern bloc.<sup>769</sup> Their sympathy towards socialism and antagonism towards capitalism were first and foremost products of Third World politics, especially in Latin America. The prevalence of the concept of ‘conscientization’, the creative articulation of new rights, and the emphasis on ‘liberation’ all reflected liberation theology (discussed in chapter 5).<sup>770</sup> But liberation theology could hardly be painted as an ‘impartial’ approach, quite the opposite: it departed from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed, especially those in the global South. By framing the political agenda that it inferred from this approach as a question of human rights, the CCIA and its like-minded associates sought to win the WCC's world-wide constituency over to their cause.

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<sup>766</sup> Martin Ennals, ‘The Non-Governmental Organization as an Instrument for Defending Human Rights’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 3 (Geneva: WCC, 1974) 21-27, on 26-27.

<sup>767</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 3. JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>769</sup> Armin Boyens, ‘Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen und Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland zwischen West und Ost’, in Gerhard Besier, Armin Boyens, and Gerhard Lindemann, *Nationaler Protestantismus und Ökumenische Bewegung: Kirchliches Handeln im Kalten Krieg (1945-1990)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999) 27-322; Hedwig Richter, ‘Der Protestantismus und das linksrevolutionäre Pathos: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen in Genf im Ost-West-Konflikt in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 36 (2010) 408-436.

<sup>770</sup> Cf. Albers, ‘Die ÖRK und die Menschenrechte’.

The consultation's participants recognized, however, that in any given case, there would inevitably be disagreement over which course of action should or should not be taken. In line with liberation theology's bottom-up, contextualist ethos, the report made clear that churches at the local and national levels would have to take the lead: 'primary responsibility for the defense and promotion of human rights in relation to the actual situation in different parts of the world lies with local and national churches'.<sup>771</sup> At the same time, it articulated priorities, such as promoting the ratification of the UN Covenants and engaging in 'the great task of conscientizing the people', while also helping victims of human rights violations access legal or other means of redress.<sup>772</sup> The institutional resources of the WCC and especially the CCIA, meanwhile, would be devoted to activities such as gathering and disseminating information, issuing statements of protest and denunciation, and encouraging churches to educate their members on human rights.<sup>773</sup>

The reports acknowledged that the churches would not in all cases be willing or able to obey the imperative to work for human rights. For instance, churches might not recognize 'that in many cases they, the christians [sic], may be among the exploiters and oppressors'.<sup>774</sup> Furthermore, 'many churches have become integral parts of their nation-states' power structures and do not apply that vision [of justice and dignity]. Other churches have come into paralyzing conflict and tension with Government leaders. In both instances church leaders sometimes feel prevented from speaking openly.'<sup>775</sup> Thus, 'while local bodies are more intimately acquainted with human rights situations (...), in many instances, "the closer one is to the realities, the less one is able to act"'.<sup>776</sup> In such cases, the WCC would have to take upon itself the task of issuing statements 'designed to diminish the negative effects of human rights situations', although 'with sensitivity where people are liable to suffer as a result of such intervention'.<sup>777</sup> Whereas the phrase on church leaders feeling prevented from speaking openly applied, *inter alia*, to the churches in Eastern Europe, and seemed to invite WCC denunciation of human rights violations there, these latter qualifications pointed more towards 'silent diplomacy' than public protest. The two operative principles put forward here, the primacy of local agency and, in the absence of this, a weighing of options based on effectiveness and the wellbeing of the victims

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<sup>771</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 6, JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid., 6-8.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., 7.

in question, surfaced in discussions on Eastern Europe at Nairobi and beyond (see chapter 1). Little public criticism of religious freedom in the USSR was voiced, on the grounds that the churches themselves were not engaged in open resistance and denunciation would only be counterproductive.

For all the importance of Third World perspectives at St. Pölten, it should not be overlooked that many Western contributions had core tenets in common with them. American delegates, among whom was a Native American, were disturbed by increasing evidence that their country fell short of its claim of being a ‘force for good’, especially in Latin America. They and many Western European participants agreed on the importance of considering structural causes and solutions to human rights violations, and the need for the West to help those in the Third World. For Europeans the legacy and guilt of colonialism – by no means a thing of the past, especially in Southern Africa – provided an important motive in this respect. At the same time, they could look to the European Convention on Human Rights and the prospective dissemination of its mechanisms abroad as a way for Europe to redeem itself.<sup>778</sup> In a response to the consultation, the Portuguese participant and theologian A.J. Dimas Almeida drew heavily on the language of liberation theology.<sup>779</sup> At the same time, Western European contributions were prone to fall into a charity-oriented paternalism based on ‘the duty of the well-to-do and the healthy to “bring rights” and provide the poor and the weak with the necessities of life’.<sup>780</sup> And there was also criticism: the influential West German emeritus professor of public law Ulrich Scheuner, who had served as interim chairman of the CCIA from 1968 to 1969, insisted that in order to preserve a definite meaning, human rights ‘must retain a connection to individual forms of freedom’ – in which regard he praised Latin American advocacy of civil and political rights – and be restricted to apolitical ‘fundamental rights’. Scheuner feared that Third World participants were ‘seeking to dissolve the term human rights into a universal demand for greater justice among the peoples’. Nevertheless, even Scheuner acknowledged that his conception of fundamental rights ‘grew out of the special historical and social conditions of the West’, that the ‘Western conception is changing too’, and that ‘social rights must be included, remembering that they have a different structure’ (a point that was not systematically discussed at the consultation).<sup>781</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> Jean Périquier, ‘Report on the 25th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration and 20th Anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 1 (May 1974) 68-75, quote on 70.

<sup>779</sup> A.J. Dimas Almeida, ‘Human Rights and the Liberation of Human Beings without Rights’, in ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, *CCLA Background Information*, no. 8 (1975) 3-6, quote on 6.

<sup>780</sup> Gustav Wingren, ‘Human Rights – A Theological Analysis’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 2 (1974) 12-15, quotes on 14-15.

<sup>781</sup> Ulrich Scheuner, ‘Human Rights in the Ecumenical Discussion’, in ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, *CCLA Background Information*, no. 8 (1975) 31-42, quotes on 32, 36-39.

Eastern European participants' contributions, by contrast, were often so doctrinaire – rehearsing textbook accounts of the socialist conception of human rights – that it seems implausible that they exerted a major influence. The Russian Orthodox papers included in the preparatory volumes showed how little room for maneuver Eastern churchmen had, or how little inclination to deviate from the party line.<sup>782</sup> Eastern European contributions were suggestive, however, of the way in which socialist participants could seek alliances with Third World positions in order to undercut Western discourse on civil and political rights (consciously or not, this paralleled the tactics employed by socialist states in international diplomacy). The Polish jurist Bernard Jarzynka, for instance, quoted from the 1968 Tehran Proclamation, which drew from the 'indivisible' nature of the categories of rights the conclusion that “the achievement of lasting progress in the implementation of human rights is dependent upon sound and effective national and international policies of economic and social development”. As Jarzynka phrased it, ‘respect for economic and social rights is the precondition for the realization of other human rights’.<sup>783</sup> Likewise, a statement by the Christian Peace Conference reasoned that social and economic rights had priority over ‘the secondary political rights’, because ‘who is illiterate, hungry, without shelter and job cannot fully realize civil human rights’.<sup>784</sup> The contribution by K. Pröhle, the General Secretary of the Ecumenical Council of Hungary and a participant in the consultation, spoke of the Third World, where ‘the great masses who are under privileged or who have no rights at all, are encouraged by the Declaration of Human Rights to change their situation by revolutionary means’, leading to ‘a new economic and social order’.<sup>785</sup> Such attempts at pushing a conception of human rights weighted heavily towards socioeconomic concerns, whether opportunistic or genuine in motivation, could not prevent the consultation’s outcome from including sustained attention to individual civil and political rights. After all, the final list of six rights included a mixture of different kinds of rights.

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<sup>782</sup> Vitaly Borovoy, ‘Religious Rights of the Soviet Citizen’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 2 (1974) 56-62; N. Zabolotsky, ‘Social Rights in the USSR’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 2 (1974) 63-66.

<sup>783</sup> Bernard Jarzynka, ‘The European Socialist States and Human Rights’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 1 (1974) 58-60, quote on 59.

<sup>784</sup> Christian Peace Conference, ‘Theological Reflections on the Question of Human Rights’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 2 (1974) 24-27, quote on 27.

<sup>785</sup> K. Pröhle, ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’, in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility*, Vol. 2 (1974) 3-9, quote on 7-8.

## The road from St. Pölten

### *The Nairobi Assembly*

Whereas the St. Pölten consultation had been a small gathering of CCIA invitees and WCC staff members, with no formal power to set the ecumenical agenda, the 1975 Nairobi Assembly brought together the WCC's 260 member churches. The Assembly's location, though partly accidental – originally it had been planned for Jakarta – was symbolic, this being the first WCC Assembly to take place in Africa. It was also the first Assembly that Potter, the WCC's first black General Secretary, presided over. Just over half of the WCC's member churches were now non-Western, though they were still underrepresented: 38 per cent of delegates at the conference came from the Third World (up from 29 per cent at Uppsala, and 15 per cent at Amsterdam).<sup>786</sup>

The Assembly discussed human rights as part of its Section V, entitled 'Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation'. The section's report consisted of three subsections: human rights, sexism, and racism. This division was described as serving merely 'practical purposes', because '[s]tructures of injustice and struggles of liberation cannot be separated from each other', indicating a sense of interdependence that permeated the Assembly's discussions. The subsection on human rights rooted ecumenical concern in 'our conviction that God wills a society in which all can exercise full human rights', because of man having been created in the image of God, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which bound Christians together.<sup>787</sup> This built on the biblical basis for human rights established at St. Pölten, which had noted that 'the emphasis of the Gospel is on the value of all human beings in the sight of God, on the atoning and redeeming work of Christ that has given to man his true dignity, on love as the motive for action, and on love of one's neighbour as the practical expression of an active faith in Christ'.<sup>788</sup>

Though the report's framework noted that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Covenants, as well as the recent Helsinki Final Act, 'largely coincide with our current Christian understanding about what makes up a just society', its recommendations on how to provide the right conditions for the implementation of human rights went much further than any standard or instrument of international law.<sup>789</sup> The report warned of the temptation to only deal with 'symptoms

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<sup>786</sup> Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 342.

<sup>787</sup> Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers*, 102.

<sup>788</sup> 'Introduction', in CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) i-v, on i, JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>789</sup> Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers*, 103.

rather than root causes', with the latter taking the form of 'unjust social structures, expressed through, e.g., economic exploitation, political manipulation, military power, class domination, psychological conditioning', which 'create the conditions under which human rights are denied'. Therefore, working for human rights 'also means to work at the most basic level towards a society without unjust structures'.<sup>790</sup> The WCC thus fused appeals to the dignity of the individual human being with a contentious interpretation of socio-political questions.

The report noted that throughout, 'self-determination by individuals, groups, and nations' had to be balanced, preventing one from unduly encroaching on another.<sup>791</sup> Its enumeration of six categories of rights entailed such a balancing act between individual and collective rights: (1) 'The Right to Basic Guarantees for Life' (specifically to work, food, health care, education), (2) 'The Rights to Self-Determination and to Cultural Identity, and the Rights of Minorities' (people's 'right freely to determine their political status and freely to pursue their economic, cultural, and social development'), (3) 'The Right to Participate in Decision-Making within the Community', (4) 'The Right to Dissent' (specifically to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly), (5) 'The Right to Personal Dignity' (including habeas corpus, the right to life, freedom from torture), and finally – demoted from being the first right on the ecumenical agenda to the last – (6) 'The Right to Religious Freedom' (the freedom to choose a religion and to manifest it through 'worship, observance, practice, and teaching', as well as 'the right and duty of religious bodies to criticize the ruling powers').<sup>792</sup> These six rights or categories of rights provided the backbone of the WCC's new conception of human rights.

### *Theological and regional consultations and the NIEO*

How did the WCC's new conception of human rights alter its subsequent practice? Only further research can answer this question in full, but a few tentative observations may be made. At the theological level, St. Pölten and Nairobi were significant for providing a biblical basis for human rights, which subsequent theological consultations and debates elaborated on. The ramifications of this differed widely depending on its reception by the WCC's various member churches. Theological debate arguably played a much greater role in spreading awareness of the general notion of human

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<sup>790</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>792</sup> Ibid., 102-106.



rights among the churches than it did in specifying their content. For example, from 1978 to 1980, the CCIA coordinated an 'Interconfessional Study Project on the Theological Basis of Human Rights'. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace, the Preparatory Committee of the Pan Orthodox Council, the Baptist World Alliance, and the Anglican Consultative Council all participated. At a month-long gathering in Geneva, from 3 April to 3 May 1980, theologians from the denominations these organizations represented agreed, in Marc Reuver's words,

'that a common Christian understanding exists in the basic doctrine that all theological statements on human rights derive from the Christian anthropology of the human person created in the image of God. Thus, all people irrespective of their skills and achievements have the same inviolable and inalienable dignity and a common hope: the human destiny of being made in the image of God is to be perfected by becoming like unto God.'<sup>793</sup>

But the theological approaches underlying this abstract commitment continued to differ, departing from either 'the creation of the human being' (Roman Catholic), 'the experience of God's covenant with his people' (Reformed), or 'the event of the justification of sinners through the grace of God in Jesus Christ' (Lutheran). As Reuver pointed out, these positions left unresolved questions such as the relationship between individual and collective rights: whereas the Lutheran approach insisted on the primacy of individual rights, the Reformed participants ascribed 'equal importance' to 'individual and collective rights'.<sup>794</sup> Thus, the meeting illustrated that a common Christian understanding of human rights could only be achieved at a high level of abstraction, leaving indeterminate which specific approach was commensurate with it. This remained a matter to be decided closer to the ground, where practice tended to outpace theology. Nevertheless, this and a range of other attempts at theologizing human rights were significant in that they indicated that the concept of human rights was in the process of being transformed from a means, as it had primarily been from the 1940s onward, into an end.

With respect to the WCC's policy, it is important to keep in mind that the Nairobi Assembly's report on human rights straddled divergent positions. Its lack of a fully unified agenda went hand in hand with a diffusion of agency away from the CCIA and towards other WCC bodies, as well as

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<sup>793</sup> 'An Interconfessional Study Project on the Theological Basis of Human Rights', in Marc Reuver, ed., *Human Rights: A Challenge to Theology* (Rome: CCIA & IDOC International, 1983) 20-27, on 25.

<sup>794</sup> Reuver notes that these classifications (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran) applied only broadly speaking. Ibid., 25.

towards ecclesiastical organizations at the national and local levels.<sup>795</sup> In the increasingly polycentric ecumenical landscape of the 1970s, such diffusion was embraced and even encouraged by the CCIA, which – in the spirit of Nairobi’s emphasis on ‘participation’ – stimulated the agency of local actors and acted as a global coordinator and clearinghouse, for instance by co-organizing regional consultations on human rights. The content of these regional consultations was an important marker of the development of ecumenical views on human rights in practice.

Though the WCC in these years stressed collective rights, this should be understood as a repudiation of a narrow liberal conception of human rights rather than of individual civil and political rights as such. Had the outcome of St. Pölten and Nairobi been a compromise between collectivist Third World representatives and individualist First World representatives, one would have expected regional Third World consultations to focus entirely on collective rights. As chapter 5 has shown with regard to Latin America, however, this was not the case: civil and political rights featured prominently, even if they were set in a wider framework. The same applied to regional consultations in the other two main areas representing the WCC’s Third World constituency: Africa and Asia. Potter’s speech at the Assembly of the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), held in Lusaka in 1974, illustrates the main thrust behind the WCC’s stance. As Efiog Utuk renders his speech,

[w]hile he [Potter] agreed that Africans had suffered untold hardship at the hand of foreigners, Potter did not use it to excuse social irresponsibility. In his opinion, the colonial experience actually magnified African responsibility rather than lessened it. For this reason, he challenged Africans to see the other side of the coin: their own contribution to injustice and oppression. “We do well”, he emphatically declared, “to look at ourselves”.<sup>796</sup>

In other words, the WCC was not content to merely point the finger at the global North: it encouraged churches in the South to adopt a critical stance towards their own societies and states.

The AACC’s 16-22 February 1975 Human Rights Consultation in Khartoum, co-organized with the CCIA, addressed the causes of civil and political human rights violations in Africa in a similar spirit. The consultation’s 22 participants sought the causes of human rights violations in a listing of seven factors:

- ‘- anachronistic customs in African culture
- colonialism and apartheid
- the feeling of insecurity among national leaders [sic] military rule

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<sup>795</sup> See James C. Kennedy, ‘Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationals’, in Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, eds., *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalisation and Faith Communities since 1750* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 292-318.

<sup>796</sup> Efiog Utuk, *Visions of Authenticity: The Assemblies of the All Africa Conference of Churches 1963-1992* (Nairobi: AACC, 1997) 114.

- disparities in opportunities for education and employment, which produce social injustices
- the poverty gap in African societies
- the widespread and permanent use of emergency powers, and
- the unlimited prerogatives of national security forces.<sup>797</sup>

This listing only glancingly referred to external factors (though more of these may have been unstated, treated as given), and instead focused attention on the abuse of power by African governments, as well as the persistence of poverty and social injustice. A report presented to the consultation located the source of widespread violations of individual and especially group rights in the legacy of colonialism, especially in terms of economic structures, but it also criticized the “leadership cult” by which African leaders monopolized and perpetuated power, in violation of democratic rights.<sup>798</sup> The consultation recommended that the African churches engage in ‘training, awareness-building, protests, encouragement and support for those in society whose human rights are abused’.<sup>799</sup> It was considered important in this respect that the African churches ‘become self-reliant’ so as to bolster the ‘credibility’ of their protests: foreign ties allowed African governments to accuse them of being foreign elements and agents of neocolonialism. Other measures included calling on governments to ratify the Organization of African Unity’s Convention on Refugees and the UN Covenants, and to establish a ‘Human Rights Commission for Africa’ as well as an African version of the International Commission of Jurists, an ‘Association of African lawyers’.<sup>800</sup> All in all, the report was striking for its emphasis on civil and political rights and endogenous causes for their violation.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)’s 14-16 June 1975 consultation in Hong Kong was smaller than its African counterpart, involving fifteen participants, from Japan, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Republic of Korea, as well as the CCA’s staff, which was based in Singapore, and the CCIA’s Ninan Koshy. Four countries were singled out as particularly problematic: the Philippines, India, Indonesia, and South Korea. In all of these countries, the main issue was political repression, particularly political imprisonment. In India, economic policies, especially the “urban renewal programmes” were also considered a major issue, which made it stand somewhat apart from the other countries. The consultation noted that in Asia, support from the churches, including ecumenical bodies, in addressing these issues was not always forthcoming, due to their alignment with the

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<sup>797</sup> ‘Statement of the Consultation’, in ‘The Churches and Human Rights in Africa’, *CCLA Background Information*, no. 2 (1975) 3-4, quote on 3.

<sup>798</sup> All Africa Council of Churches/World Council of Churches, ‘Factors Responsible for the Violation of Human Rights in Africa’, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 6, 4 (1976) 44-46.

<sup>799</sup> ‘Statement of the Consultation’, in ‘The Churches and Human Rights in Africa’, *CCLA Background Information*, no. 2 (1975) 3-4, quote on 3.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

government. The CCA was thus asked to (and did) contact the National Councils of Churches in India and Indonesia, to move them to pressure the government.<sup>801</sup> Also, in the period leading up to the consultation, the CCIA indicated that it felt ‘that Asia urgently needs an analogous outfit’ to the Human Rights Resources Office on Latin America, taking up St. Pölten’s call to develop further programs of support to local churches.<sup>802</sup> No such proposal was discussed at the consultation, though, possibly because it would have overlapped with the CCA’s activities. Nevertheless, the consultation showed that issues like political imprisonment remained high on the ecumenical agenda even after the WCC’s embrace of collective rights.

Another measure of the relationship between individual and collective rights in practice is the WCC’s attitude towards the NIEO, the mid-1970s diplomatic offensive by states from the global South which was then the most salient initiative in terms of collective rights.<sup>803</sup> The WCC took a supportive stance toward the NIEO, which Nils Gilman has recently defined as an attempt to ‘transform the governance of the global economy to redirect more of the benefits of transnational integration toward “the developing nations”’.<sup>804</sup> As Gilman writes, ‘[t]o reread all the speeches delivered on behalf of the NIEO is to be struck by the hopeful idea that the north could be reasoned into accepting the moral necessity of abandoning its privileged position in the geopolitical hierarchy.’<sup>805</sup> The WCC played its part in furthering this cause. Speaking at the Nairobi Assembly, Potter welcomed the NIEO, and warned: ‘We face the alternatives of co-operation in finding a new way of relating to each other as nations, or of confrontation leading to mutual destruction.’<sup>806</sup> At its summer 1974 meeting, the CCIA had already issued a statement on ‘The Economic Threat to Peace’, in which it stated that the UN ‘Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order’ ‘indicates the way’ to deal with the ‘crisis’ the world was facing. The CCIA conceived of this crisis in terms of the finitude of world resources as well as social justice, not only between nations but also within them. The CCIA stressed that “‘development’ must be understood as progress towards a just

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<sup>801</sup> Christian Conference of Asia, ‘Consultation on Human Rights’, 14-16 June 1975, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.4/6.1. For context on South Korea, the most prominent case, including attention to the role of the WCC, see Ingu Hwang, ‘Democracy in South Korea and Korean-American Relations in the 1970s’ (PhD dissertation: University of Chicago, 2014).

<sup>802</sup> Niilus to San Jung Park, 17 February 1975, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.15.3.5.4.

<sup>803</sup> For an overview of the literature and a range of interpretations, see the special issue of *Humanity*, 6, 1 (2015).

<sup>804</sup> Nils Gilman, ‘The New International Economic Order: A Reintroduction’, *Humanity*, 6, 1 (2015) 1-16, on 1 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>806</sup> Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers*, 248.

and humanly satisfying social system, appropriate to the needs and aspirations of each developing country, and not crudely as growth only in gross national product'.<sup>807</sup>

Ecumenical leaders such as Niilus saw in the NIEO a possible answer to the problem of structural 'root causes' that figured so prominently in their deliberations on human rights. The St. Pölten consultation dealt with social, economic and cultural rights (under the heading of 'the right to work'), writing on the question of root causes that:

'These [social, economic and cultural rights] can only become reality if a new international economic order is created based on equity, sovereignty, interdependence, common interest and cooperation among the nations – to correct inequalities and redress existing injustices; to eliminate the widening gap between the rich and the poor; and to make possible economic and social development in peace and justice.'<sup>808</sup>

In a further 1975 reflection on 'The New International Economic Order and the Churches', the CCIA elaborated on the 'Economic Threat to Peace' statement, writing that the required 'transformation' went 'beyond modification of existing international economic structures, which perpetuate underdevelopment and intensify the threat to peace, to the establishment of a new, just alternative system'.<sup>809</sup> The CCIA outlined the many issues at stake under the headings of 'Economic structures', 'International trade', 'Foreign Capital Investments and Cooperation', 'Transnational Corporations', 'Income Redistribution', 'Development Strategy to Combat Poverty', and, finally, the 'Role of the churches'. As to this last point, the CCIA wrote that '[t]he churches and their agencies have an important task to become better informed and to help church people everywhere become more aware of and concerned about the requirements of a new international economic order'.<sup>810</sup>

The NIEO was a state-centric initiative, however, undertaken by a coalition of states and aiming at improving the position of developing states vis-à-vis industrialized ones: its 'unit of poverty was the state, not the individual'.<sup>811</sup> Antony Anghie has argued that, as an initiative that focused on relations between nations rather than their domestic affairs, the NIEO clashed with the contemporaneous rise of human rights; the utopia of 'development' competed with that of 'human rights'.<sup>812</sup> And as Samuel Moyn has recently argued, '[f]rom the beginning, it was easy to see that, as a

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<sup>807</sup> CCIA, 'The Economic Threat to Peace', *The Ecumenical Review*, 27, 1 (1975) 67-69, quote on 68.

<sup>808</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights and Christian Responsibility: Report of the Consultation St. Pölten, Austria, 21-26 October 1974* (Geneva: WCC, 1975) 13, JPNL-KDC, inv. no. 63.

<sup>809</sup> CCIA, 'The New International Economic Order and the Churches', June 1975, 1, WCCA CCIA 428.04.18 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

<sup>811</sup> Gilman, 'The New International Economic Order', 4.

<sup>812</sup> Antony Anghie, 'Whose Utopia? Human Rights, Development, and the Third World', *Qui Parle*, 22, 1 (2013) 63-80.

movement of, by, and for states (or “peoples”), the NIEO made no provision for internal distribution or internal governance in any respect – including when it came to the whole gamut of basic rights’.<sup>813</sup> Roland Burke has stressed the hypocrisy this could lead to in the realm of UN human rights politics, as postcolonial dictatorships used the rhetoric of the NIEO as a way of justifying their disregard for individual rights.<sup>814</sup> Bradley has written that in consequence, the NIEO’s

‘claims were largely put to the side by most self-styled transnational human rights activists in the West over the decade [the 1970s], who were uncomfortable with the collectivist sensibilities and the privileging of economic over political and civil rights that underlay what was a competing vision of global human rights’.<sup>815</sup>

The WCC was aware of the NIEO’s state-centric nature, as when the Central Committee’s 1977 statement on the subject remarked, critically:

‘It should be recognized that the NIEO is focused on power and economic relationships, on state actions at *inter-state* level and, therefore, it is incomplete. The very nature of participation at inter-state level does not answer the questions about the nature of participation *within* the nation-state.’<sup>816</sup>

The CCIA’s annual report of the same year noted as one of the current issues on its agenda the ‘[b]arriers to the establishment of a just economic order within and between nations’.<sup>817</sup> Liberation theology’s ‘preferential option for the poor’ placed the church at odds with domestic inequality, pitting the community (or ‘the people’) against states which would entrench the privileges of the elite. In line with this, the Nairobi Assembly defined development as ‘a liberating process aimed at justice, self-reliance and economic growth. It is essentially a people’s struggle in which the poor and the oppressed are and should be the active agents and immediate beneficiaries’.<sup>818</sup> The WCC thus remained attentive to questions of distributive justice on the national level.

In the years following the Nairobi Assembly, the CCIA put out major statements that reflected the continuing capaciousness of its human rights agenda: torture (1977), extrajudicial executions

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<sup>813</sup> Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018) 117.

<sup>814</sup> Beyond the literature cited above, see Roland Burke, “‘How Time Flies’: Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 1960s”, *The International History Review*, 38, 3 (2016) 394-420; Roland Burke, ‘Competing for the Last Utopia?: The NIEO, Human Rights, and the World Conference for the International Women’s Year, Mexico City, June 1975’, *Humanity*, 6, 1 (2015) 47-61; Roland Burke, ‘From Individual Rights to National Development: The First UN International Conference on Human Rights, Tehran, 1968’, *Journal of World History*, 19, 3 (2008) 275-296.

<sup>815</sup> Mark Philip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 150.

<sup>816</sup> MRCC 1977, 43 (emphases in original).

<sup>817</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1974-1978* (Geneva: WCC, 1979) 50 (emphasis omitted).

<sup>818</sup> Quoted in Commission on the Churches’ Participation in Development, ‘CCPD Programme Thrusts’, May 1976 1, WCCA CCIA 428.04.18.

(1982), refugees and migrant workers (1983), death penalty (1990), indigenous people and land rights (1991), and violence against women (1992).<sup>819</sup> At the same time, its programmatic emphasis on root causes and its concomitant stress on collective rights remained. In 1993, a CCIA review reaffirmed the WCC's 1983 Vancouver Assembly's statement that 'human rights cannot be dealt with in isolation from the larger issues of peace, justice, militarism, disarmament and development'.<sup>820</sup> In line with this, the CCIA observed that '[m]ost WCC programmes are designed to promote and bring about structural changes in favour of the poor and the oppressed'. The WCC's member churches were thus 'encouraged to promote efforts that are geared to enlarge socio-economic, political and cultural rights of the people'. The review mentioned 'specific human rights issues' such as 'torture, death penalty, extra-judicial killings etc.' But while these were urgent and highly visible, the logic of root causes meant that they were ultimately epiphenomenal in relation to wider struggles.<sup>821</sup>

## Conclusions

At St. Pölten and Nairobi, the WCC embraced a conception of human rights that differed sharply from that of the previous decades: it was capacious, liberationist, communitarian, and overtly political, as opposed to focused on religious freedom, secular, individualist, and depoliticized. Different interpretations have been offered as to how to understand this recasting of human rights. Karsten Lehmann has argued that these years saw a process of 'mainstreaming' the concept of human rights within the WCC, whereby human rights were adopted as a 'common denominator' of WCC activities.<sup>822</sup> Indeed, different departments and commissions of the WCC could (partly) reframe their work in terms of human rights.<sup>823</sup> Yet it is important to recognize that what might look like a human rights issue from a human rights point of view did not necessarily do so from the viewpoint of the issue, say development, itself. Further research is needed to determine the substantive influence of the WCC's human rights agenda on its wider programs.

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<sup>819</sup> CCIA, *Human Rights: A Global Ecumenical Agenda* (Geneva: WCC, 1993) 13-20.

<sup>820</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. This being said, it should be noted that the CCIA also put out several studies on religious liberty during these years: a 'Study Paper on Religious Liberty' (1980), a study entitled 'Religious Liberty: Some Major Considerations in the Current Debate' (1987), and the 1995 report of the 'Working Group on Religion and the State, Religious Liberty and Intolerance' (presented in Clement John, ed., 'Human Rights and the Churches: New Challenges: Reports and Papers of the Global Review of Ecumenical Policies and Practises on Human Rights', *CCIA Background Information*, no. 1 (1998) 113-117).

<sup>822</sup> Karsten Lehmann, *Religious NGOs in International Relations: The Construction of 'the Religious' and 'the Secular'* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 112-4.

<sup>823</sup> CCIA, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 1974-1978* (Geneva: WCC, 1979) 46.

In his analysis of these years, Albers has argued that the process of redefining human rights served to bring ecumenists from the North and South to ‘see eye to eye’ by speaking a shared language. As to the tension between individual and collective rights, he has argued that human rights and ‘the question of anticolonialism did not stand in opposition’ to each other, but ‘blended together in the overarching desire to establish a better world’.<sup>824</sup> Though not in relation to human rights specifically, Annegreth Schilling has similarly argued that the WCC’s interaction with Christians from Latin America served to create an intermediary ‘third space (...) where theological and cultural differences were articulated and negotiated’.<sup>825</sup>

The above account confirms these observations but gives greater attention to the tensions inherent in the new ecumenical human rights agenda. Framing collective and structural issues in terms of human rights served as an effective strategy for placing Third World concerns on the WCC’s agenda and inviting ecumenists from the global North to engage with them. But the political issues at stake, ranging from international trade agreements and development aid to military spending and environmental degradation, rather than blending together, remained as contentious as ever. Epps’ remarks in the lead-up to St. Pölten illustrate how the CCIA saw in the concept of human rights a vehicle which enjoyed widespread legitimacy, yet at the same time sought to expand its meaning. The concept could only be stretched so far, however: casting political issues in terms of human rights did not obviate the need to persuade more conservative churches to support causes like the NIEO. The concept of human rights thus invited sympathy and solidarity but could not easily accommodate the ecumenical leadership’s politico-theological visions of liberation.

How was the WCC’s approach situated in relation to other, contemporaneous conceptions of human rights? Burke has written that in the 1970s there were ‘two poles’ in human rights advocacy, one of which was exemplified by Amnesty, the other by the ‘New Internationalism’, exemplified by the NIEO.<sup>826</sup> The WCC can be understood as charting a course between these two poles, while leaning towards the latter. Unlike Amnesty, it stressed social, economic, and collective rights; in contrast to Amnesty’s universalism, it pressed for a contextual ethics, rooted in liberation theology; and while Amnesty scrupulously observed its political ‘impartiality’, the CCIA tended towards a left-wing and

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<sup>824</sup> Translation mine. Albers, ‘Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte’, 209.

<sup>825</sup> Schilling, *Revolution, Exil und Befreiung*, 275. Cf. Annegreth Schilling, ‘Between Context and Conflict: The ‘Boom’ of Latin American Protestantism in the Ecumenical Movement (1955-75)’, *Journal of Global History*, 13, 2 (2018) 274-293.

<sup>826</sup> Roland Burke, ‘The Internationalism of Human Rights’, in Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 287-314, on 311. Cf. Albers, ‘Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte’, 209.



Third World-oriented political agenda. Yet the CCIA had in common with Amnesty its transnational character as a non-governmental organization, and this was key in distinguishing its views from those of the NIEO. In other respects, most obviously its focus on North-South relations and its emphasis on collective rights, but also in its tendency towards cultural relativism, the CCIA gravitated towards the NIEO, as its solidarity with the global South predisposed it to. The CCIA's continued advocacy of individual civil and political rights and its function as a hub among Third World churches opposed to repression showed that it did not identify with authoritarian governance.<sup>827</sup> But given its emphasis on 'root causes', the WCC's agenda during the 1970s represented a much more politically radical view than that associated with the 'breakthrough' of minimalist human rights.<sup>828</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> It was, nevertheless, charged with selectivity, not only with regard to the countries of the Eastern bloc, as discussed in chapter 1, but also with regard to socialist governments in the Third World, such as Cuba. E.g. Jagessar, *Full Life for All*, 271.

<sup>828</sup> Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

# Conclusions

## The ecumenical movement, human rights, and religious freedom from the 1940s onward

From the 1940s to the 1970s, the human rights engagement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) changed drastically. From the 1940s, its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), which also represented the International Missionary Council (IMC), functioned as an important hub in a global network of ecumenical Christians – predominantly Protestants – who advocated, above all, for religious freedom when they or their coreligionists came under threat. While the WCC's human rights agenda expanded piecemeal from the mid-1960s onward, especially in response to the issue of racism, it was only during the 1970s that the WCC developed a new and expansive approach to human rights. The new ecumenical conception of human rights prominently included not only civil and political but also social, economic, and collective rights, and was informed by liberation theology in its emphasis on changing unjust social structures, both within and between the countries of the global North and South.

This story contributes to filling a lacuna in the historiography on human rights from the 1940s to the 1970s, which has mainly focused on, broadly speaking, secular liberals and conservative Catholics. Insofar as Protestants have received attention, the literature has tended to focus on the United States. This dissertation, by contrast, brings squarely into view the transnational Protestant human rights engagement of the WCC. As the most important embodiment of the ecumenical movement, with a constituency of many millions – in 1954, '170 millions of our fellow Christians in the 163 member churches'<sup>829</sup> – and the participation of many prominent church- and laypeople, the WCC represented the ideals of an influential part of the Protestant elites of postwar Western Europe and North America. The fact that the CCIA also represented the IMC, which was integrated into the WCC in 1961, meant that the churches were connected closely to the global missionary movement. By the 1970s, the WCC's prominence entered a decline which was not to be reversed, yet it still functioned as a key forum in which its increasingly geographically, denominationally, and ethnically diverse membership articulated and negotiated different perspectives. And though the WCC was

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<sup>829</sup> W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1954* (London: SCM Press, 1955) 131.

marked by an emphasis on dialogue and deliberation, through the influence of its members and through its own programs, it continued to exert influence on a range of political situations, such as resistance to military dictatorships in Latin America and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The WCC's development thus offers a unique window into Protestant engagement with human rights in the postwar era of Cold War and decolonization.

Previous accounts of ecumenical activities in the realm of human rights have focused on its work at the United Nations, seen by the WCC as its secular counterpart.<sup>830</sup> The starting point of this dissertation has been the well-known achievement of the CCIA's Director, the American Lutheran theologian Rev. O. Frederick Nolde, in close collaboration with Charles Malik, the Lebanese Ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations, as well as a commissioner of the CCIA, in shaping Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The 'Declaration on Religious Liberty' adopted by the WCC and the IMC a few months earlier likewise reflected Nolde's work. This in turn mainly represented the outcome of American church and missionary deliberations during World War II, which integrated religious freedom into the novel framework of human rights (whereas earlier ecumenical statements on religious freedom, at Oxford in 1937 and Madras in 1938, had not yet done so). While the CCIA's work at the United Nations continued after 1948, it was primarily concerned with safeguarding an expansive interpretation of Article 18 and related rights. During the 1960s, a declaration and even a convention on 'religious intolerance' was envisioned, which could have seen an ecumenical intervention of comparable significance to that of 1948, but no such instruments materialized. Meanwhile, though Nolde in particular remained committed to the development of UN human rights instruments more broadly, this process stalled in the early 1950s and would only be revived from the late 1960s on. Thus, though there remains room for further research on the CCIA's activities at the UN in the 1950s and 1960s (and indeed beyond), this dissertation argues that during these years, ecumenical activities below the intergovernmental level were much more significant.

Whereas the literature on the ecumenical movement has tended to identify sources of support for 'human rights' in general, I have stressed the extent to which the CCIA was focused on religious freedom in particular. The WCC's support of human rights was in large part restricted to the development of UN instruments, above all the 'International Bill of Rights', but even in this area, the

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<sup>830</sup> James C. Kennedy, 'Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationals', in Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, eds., *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 292-318, on 293.

CCIA was focused on those provisions that related to religious freedom. Member churches of the WCC could embrace human rights for different reasons, and the American churches especially seem to have integrated it into their social thought.<sup>831</sup> But the WCC did not itself develop a clearly-defined stance on human rights, no doubt owing in part to the wide variety of opinion that existed on the concept among its membership. Even the framing of religious freedom as a human right had its skeptics, but the twin instruments of the Universal Declaration and the ecumenical ‘Declaration on Religious Liberty’ of 1948 gave the CCIA a strong mandate to advocate religious freedom in these terms. Nolde’s more general belief in human rights notwithstanding, this meant that the CCIA’s concern for human rights was in practice primarily focused on religious freedom. This fact greatly qualifies the extent to which we can speak of a Christian human rights ‘revolution’ in the 1940s.<sup>832</sup>

As scholars have pointed out, the fact that Christians supported the framework of human rights at all was significant: by articulating their core concern of religious freedom in universal language, ecumenical Protestants proved themselves willing and sometimes even eager to strike broad alliances with those outside the ecumenical movement, including the nonreligious.<sup>833</sup> The WCC thus broke with past attempts to gain recognition of the rights of churches *qua* churches, or privileges for Christian missionaries in colonized territories.<sup>834</sup> As the 1948 ‘Declaration’ stated, the ecumenical movement vowed to seek no privileges not accorded to others. Moreover, the integration of religious freedom into the framework of human rights marked a major departure in that Christians had long tended to view the concept with suspicion or outright hostility, considering it a product of the French Revolution and nineteenth-century socialism.<sup>835</sup>

Yet the universalization of ecumenical ideals through the language of human rights did not mean that formulations like Article 18 were shorn of their underlying agenda, as Linde Lindkvist’s

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<sup>831</sup> See especially the connections to antiracism drawn in Gene Zubovich, ‘For Human Rights Abroad, against Jim Crow at Home: The Political Mobilization of American Ecumenical Protestants in the World War II Era’, *Journal of American History*, 105, 2 (2018) 267-290; Gene Zubovich, ‘American Protestants and the Era of Anti-racist Human Rights’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79, 3 (2018) 427-443; Gene Zubovich, ‘The Global Gospel: Protestant Internationalism and American Liberalism, 1940-1960’ (PhD dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 2015).

<sup>832</sup> Cf. Katharina Kunter, ‘Christianity, Human Rights, and Socio-Ethical Reorientations’, in Jens Holger Schjørring, Norman A. Hjelm, and Kevin Ward, eds., *History of Global Christianity, Volume III: History of Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018) 127-146, on 132.

<sup>833</sup> I draw here on the distinction made in Sarah Shortall, ‘Theology and the Politics of Christian Human Rights’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79, 3 (2018) 445-460, on 448.

<sup>834</sup> E.g. John Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005) ch. 1; John Stuart, ‘Beyond Sovereignty? Protestant Missions, Empire and Transnationalism, 1890-1950’, in Kevin Grant and Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880-1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 103-125, on 120-121.

<sup>835</sup> Kunter, ‘Christianity, Human Rights’, 127.

work has demonstrated.<sup>836</sup> The promotion of religious freedom was meant to safeguard the role of the church in society and the freedom of missionaries to evangelize. While Article 18 represented a secularization of religious freedom, at the same time it embodied distinctly Christian priorities. And while the 1948 ‘Declaration’, which the CCIA and its associates deployed alongside the language of the Universal Declaration, was shaped by the American churches’ turn to human rights, it nevertheless represented an explicitly Christian conception of religious freedom. Reframing religious freedom as a human right should thus be understood as a rethinking of Christian mission, but by no means as its abandonment.

As the first part of this dissertation illustrates, the CCIA’s advocacy of religious freedom as a human right should be understood primarily as a way of responding to concrete church and missionary concerns. While the literature on the WCC has focused almost exclusively on the role of (Soviet) communism as its chief opponent, chapters 2 and 3 show how Islam and political Roman Catholicism also figured as major opponents. Chapters 1 to 3 all bear out the extent to which the language of human rights served as a secular instrument in efforts to protect Protestant believers and missionaries from discrimination or even ‘totalitarian’ domination – with the overriding goal of safeguarding the ability of the church to manifest itself in society and to evangelize. The CCIA and its associates brought the Universal Declaration’s Article 18 to bear as an impartial standard, but without much attention to the broader range of human rights it was part of. In fact, given the sensitivity of many of the interventions involved, it would have been almost inconceivable for the CCIA to engage in more wide-ranging criticism of the countries it was targeting: to demand of the Soviet Union or fascist Spain to not only recognize religious freedom but to cease violating civil and political rights at large would have quickly undone any attempt at exerting influence. The ecclesiastical diplomacy of the CCIA was premised on its narrow focus on religious freedom and related rights, a term which meant that other rights, such as freedom of expression or association, were referenced, but only in relation to religious freedom.

The CCIA’s embrace of the framework of human rights also did not exclude other articulations of religious freedom. Article 18 served as one instrument among others: the WCC’s Amsterdam ‘Declaration’ and, later on, its 1961 New Delhi ‘Statement’, both of which expressed an explicitly Christian and ecumenical conception of religious freedom, continued to play an important

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<sup>836</sup> Linde Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

role. Such articulations represented ecumenical convictions more fully than Article 18, despite the influence that ecumenical lobbying had exerted on the latter's content. But the secular language of Article 18, and related rights, allowed the CCIA and its contacts to deploy it as an impartial and juridical standard – most strikingly so in the case of Nigeria and Indonesia (chapter 2), where they put it forward as a model for constitutional provisions. Since the governments that the CCIA had the most immediate access to – the American and the British – had both made human rights a prominent part of their wartime and postwar rhetoric, it offered a way of spurring them to action. And most importantly, perhaps, by invoking a secular, universal formulation of religious freedom, the CCIA was able to preempt accusations that it was merely advocating privileges for Christians. Human rights thus entered the ecumenical arsenal primarily as a secular tool, yet with significant implications for the relationship between church and society. By adopting secular language and building common ground with non-Christian actors, the CCIA straddled the secular and the religious, blurring the boundary between the two.

In different circumstances, ecumenical advocacy played out in different ways. As chapter 1 shows, while the WCC in the late 1940s joined in denunciations of the Sovietization of Eastern Europe, especially with regard to the violations of religious freedom this entailed, it soon toned down its criticism. As WCC membership of the Russian Orthodox Church and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists became viable, Visser 't Hooft and others sought to promote dialogue, which included critical notes – drawing on the expansive conception of religious freedom articulated in Article 18 – but not at the price of upsetting the enlargement of the ecumenical fellowship. When, from the mid-1960s onward, Soviet Christians started to voice dissent and call for international support, the WCC responded in a few cases. But what changed in the 1970s was not so much the WCC's approach as its context, as human rights activism around Soviet religious and political dissent galvanized a transnational movement. The WCC, for reasons including its ecclesiastical nature, the belief that 'silent diplomacy' would do more good than public denunciation, and the CCIA's newfound commitment to the Third World and questions of social justice, did not adapt to this development, leaving the WCC out of step with the 1970s 'breakthrough' of human rights, of which support of Soviet dissidents was a major element.

As chapter 2 shows, the ecumenical response to decolonization in majority Muslim countries such as (Northern) Nigeria and Indonesia made more purposeful use of Article 18 and ecumenical formulations of religious freedom, since it had a clear objective: to insert their language into postcolonial constitutions. While criticism of empire was an important aspect of ecumenical thought,

American Protestants tended to be stronger in their views than British and continental Europeans. WCC statements on self-determination were thus relatively cautious, refraining from full-throated endorsement of the right to self-determination. Apprehensive of what would come after decolonization, especially in areas with Muslim majorities, the ecumenical movement's activities in terms of human rights instead focused on protecting Christian minorities and securing missionaries' freedom to evangelize. In both Indonesia and Nigeria, the ecumenical formulations of the 1940s and the Universal Declaration's Article 18 played a key role in the ensuing lobbying, which (at least initially) seemed to bear fruit. Ecumenists such as J.C. Hoekendijk and Kenneth G. Grubb used a combination of the universal language of human rights and their influence with the relevant governments as Christian leaders to advocate for the ecumenical conception of religious freedom. They sought to disentangle Christianity from empire, but at the same time to preserve Christianity, including missionary property and the freedom to evangelize, in postcolonial societies.

After World War II, anticommunism and the rise of Christian Democracy across Western Europe brought about new Protestant-Catholic coalitions. The WCC did not fit these dynamics easily: the WCC's nature as a vehicle for Christian unity impelled it to seek dialogue with an eye to expanding the ecumenical fellowship, but it was deeply troubled by the 'dominant', even 'totalitarian', and militantly anticommunist nature of political Roman Catholicism. The case of Spain (chapter 3) highlights the tension that remained between Protestants and Catholics in the postwar decades. Franco's 'National-Catholic' Spain, an 'ideal' Catholic state in the Vatican's eyes, represented political Catholicism at its very worst, and thus became a focal point for ecumenical advocacy. On the international plane, the CCIA invoked the language of human rights to draw American and British diplomatic pressure, while on the domestic level, Spanish Protestants tended to avoid international references, for fear of being branded anti-Spanish. But beyond these remedial measures, ecumenical efforts at countering Catholic universalism, encapsulated in the doctrine that 'error has no rights', had to go further than legalistic interventions. Attempts at dialogue with the Spanish government as well as the Vatican (whereas the Spanish Church hierarchy's intransigence precluded such attempts) were aimed at bringing about a more far-reaching change in mentality, in which the Catholic Church's position as Spain's established church could be made compatible with respect for the country's Protestant minority. Such a change would ultimately emanate from the Second Vatican Council, to which the ecumenical movement indirectly contributed. Though this reorientation of Catholic thinking went well beyond the specific issue of religious freedom, this concept played a key role in the Council's outcome and subsequent influence (not least in Latin America, where it would stimulate the

rise of liberation theology), setting progressive Catholics on a course toward increasing engagement with human rights.

While these chapters show the ecumenical movement's focus on religious freedom, the WCC's engagement *was* expansive in terms of its transnational reach. Not limited to the realm of intergovernmental politics, nor to the scale of small nongovernmental organizations orbiting the UN, the ecumenical movement mobilized Christian leaders in a wide range of locales. This distinguished it, for instance, from a secular organization like the International League for the Rights of Man, which served as a conduit for a wide range of groups to voice complaints at the UN, but which did not possess the resources to undertake effective action beyond this forum.<sup>837</sup> The officers of the CCIA sought to directly influence governments of countries where religious freedom was curtailed; they secured interventions by third governments (especially the American and the British); they engaged in dialogue with religious leaders; and they provided advice and support to the churchmen and missionaries in question. The prevalence of these activities suggests that the CCIA played an important role in disseminating the ecumenical conception of religious freedom as a human right among church leaders and missionaries worldwide. Further studies, making greater use of the sources produced by the CCIA's national-level interlocutors, could show in greater detail how local or national traditions of thinking about religious freedom were affected – or not – by this encounter.

## The new ecumenical approach to human rights in the 1970s and beyond

Histories of the WCC have long characterized the years around 1968 as a pivot between its first two decades, dominated by politically cautious Western Protestants, and subsequent decades wherein Third World churches and Orthodox ecumenists (as well as contacts with the Roman Catholic Church) played an increasing role and the WCC became more politically outspoken.<sup>838</sup> A generational shift, symbolized by the departure of the 'founding fathers' such as the WCC's first General Secretary, W.A. Visser 't Hooft, played an important role.<sup>839</sup> Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling's account

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<sup>837</sup> See Jan Eckel, 'The International League for the Rights of Man, Amnesty International, and the Changing Fate of Human Rights Activism from the 1940s through the 1970s', *Humanity*, 4, 2 (2013) 183-214, on 185-192.

<sup>838</sup> For a critical evaluation of the importance of the Uppsala Assembly of that year, see Annegreth Schilling, '1968 und die Ökumene: Die Volversammlung des ÖRK in Uppsala als Beginn einer neuen Ära?', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 89-119.

<sup>839</sup> The phrase is from Andrew Chandler, 'The Founding Fathers and the New Vision: The World Council of Churches, 1948-1958', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 78-88.



of the development of the WCC in the 1960s and 1970s has challenged the suddenness of this shift, taking as their period the years from 1955 to 1973 (building on Arthur Marwick's thesis of the 'long Sixties'). During this period, they contend, the WCC underwent a process of 'globalization' and 'politicization', whereby it came to be guided by a 'global conscience'.<sup>840</sup> Changes in the WCC's constituency, the political orientation of its members, and their theological leanings, all contributed to this shift, as did external developments: Kunter and Schilling rightly place the WCC's development in the context of the Cold War as a global phenomenon that shaped the trajectory of many decolonizing and developing nations, and was thus by no means restricted to competition between East and West. They compare the WCC's newfound emphasis on Third World perspectives and interests with the rise of the Non-Aligned Movement in the UN, where 'Third World states exercised numerical dominance from the 1960s on and focused attention on global North-South relations'.<sup>841</sup>

With respect to human rights, however, the WCC's agenda only gradually widened from the mid-1960s, especially on questions of race, before undergoing drastic change in the first half of the 1970s. The CCIA's relative autonomy until 1968, along with the established position of its Anglo-American leaders, Nolde and Grubb, followed by the sudden change in personnel and especially the appointment of Leopoldo J. Niilus as Director, along with Dwain C. Epps as Study Secretary, helps to account for this. Thus, while the ground had been prepared over the preceding decade or even longer, it was the agency of the CCIA's new leadership that was decisive in setting in motion the development of the WCC's new conception of human rights. The Marxist-inflected and anti-imperialist frame in which the CCIA's leadership placed its new 'integral' approach to human rights led to the inclusion of not only social and economic but also collective rights, introducing a tension with individual rights that remained unresolved. Meanwhile, on a theological level, human rights could now be put forward as a core element of ecumenical social ethics, rather than the secularized and more narrowly legalistic version of the 1940s.<sup>842</sup> Decreasing its focus on the UN, the CCIA sought instead to act as a body stimulating and coordinating activities between different parts of the WCC, churches, and secular nongovernmental organizations. In the process, it moved away from attempting to disseminate a universal conception of human rights and instead embraced a certain degree of

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<sup>840</sup> Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, "Der Christ fürchtet den Umbruch nicht": Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen im Spannungsfeld von Dekolonisierung, Entwestlichung und Politisierung', in Kunter and Schilling, eds., *Globalisierung der Kirchen*, 21-74, on 65. On context for this subject see also Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), which was published too late to be used in this dissertation.

<sup>841</sup> Kunter and Schilling, "Der Christ", 62.

<sup>842</sup> Cf. Albers, 'Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte', 205.

relativism as to the content of human rights, at least with respect to implementation (as opposed to norms), on the premise that churches would know best the needs of their communities.

Chapter 4, which traces the relationship between ecumenical discourses of antiracism and human rights, shows that while the American churches blended the two in the 1940s, the CCIA did not follow this lead. Though the WCC's declarations on racism featured occasional references to human rights, its reticence to undertake anything beyond such general statements meant that the connection remained of little importance. With respect to the case of South Africa, moreover, human rights language was peripheral not only because of the ecumenical desire for reconciliation, but also because among the WCC's South African interlocutors, the concept of human rights was regarded as dangerously 'liberal'. The American civil rights movement of the mid-1960s, to the extent that it invoked human rights, along with developments at the UN, pushed the CCIA to connect antiracism with its human rights agenda. But by 1969, when the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) was established, the CCIA's still liberal, UN-focused approach was overtaken by the PCR's direct support to liberation movements, to whom pleas to observe 'minimum standards' were hopelessly inadequate. Human rights would therefore play no more than an auxiliary role in the WCC's efforts to end apartheid and other situations of racial injustice. The PCR, however, did inform and stimulate the WCC's development of a more radical and transnational approach to human rights, especially through its emphasis on aiding liberation movements on their own terms.

It was the response to the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America, more than anything else, that shaped the WCC's new approach to human rights (chapter 5). The influx of Latin Americans, many of them formerly associated with Church and Society in Latin America [*Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina*, ISAL] into WCC leadership positions and the appeal of their perspective to the WCC's Western membership, combined with the global surge in human rights activism in response to the 1973 coup in Chile, invited vigorous ecumenical action. The CCIA and the WCC more generally served as an important hub connecting Christians across the continent as they sought to develop an effective response to repression. The WCC facilitated convergence between liberation theology and human rights, changing both in the process: as liberation theologians overcame some of their suspicions and took human rights up as a tool or even as a principle, the ecumenical conception of human rights was reconfigured to serve the goal of liberation. This involved not only attention to a wide range of rights – in itself already a drastic departure from ecumenical practice of the prior decades – but also deploying it in the process of 'conscientization', both within Latin America and in the West. Rather than merely as legal instruments, human rights thus came to serve as a moral language, to be

‘vernacularized’ as required by communities suffering repression and marginalization.<sup>843</sup> In the WCC’s usage, human rights served to draw attention to the human suffering caused by state repression, but – in contrast to the activism of Amnesty International – the CCIA emphatically sought to not lose what it saw as the structural causes of this repression from view.

From 1971 to 1975, the CCIA generalized this structural view into a new ecumenical conception of human rights, which included not only civil and political but also social, economic, and collective rights. A series of meetings put Third World perspectives center stage; Western participants either supported, acquiesced, or resisted this, for various reasons, while Eastern European participants were supportive but did not exert much substantive influence. The process that culminated in the 1974 St. Pölten consultation on ‘Human Rights and Christian Responsibility’ opened up space within which different viewpoints could be articulated. The consultation’s reports, embraced by the 1975 Nairobi Assembly, emphasized churches’ ability to see what their communities required, initiating a tendency towards pluralism and a decentralization of the CCIA’s role. The WCC’s approach in the 1970s saw limits to a conception of universality as impartiality, and instead tended towards a politics of pluralism and difference (albeit still in the framework of a universal ecumenical community). The development of the WCC’s conception of human rights in the 1970s can thus be seen as a victory for the ‘revolutionary tradition’ in the ecumenical movement, which saw the acknowledgment of fundamental differences as essential to authentic unity: process mattered more than the achievement of a consensus outcome.<sup>844</sup> Christian Albers has assessed the process as allowing ecumenists from the global North and South to ‘see eye to eye’ by speaking a shared language. As to the tension between individual and collective rights, he has argued that human rights and ‘the question of anticolonialism did not stand in opposition’ to each other, but ‘blended together in the overarching desire to establish a better world’.<sup>845</sup> Though not in relation to human rights specifically, Annegreth Schilling has similarly argued that the WCC’s interaction with Christians from Latin America served to create an intermediary ‘third space (...) where theological and cultural differences were articulated and negotiated’.<sup>846</sup>

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<sup>843</sup> I borrow this term from Mark Philip Bradley, ‘American Vernaculars: The United States and the Global Human Rights Imagination’, *Diplomatic History*, 38, 1 (2014) 1-21.

<sup>844</sup> See Justin Reynolds, ‘Against the World: International Protestantism and the Ecumenical Movement between Secularization and Politics’ (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2016) ch. 6.

<sup>845</sup> Translation mine. Albers, ‘Der ÖRK und die Menschenrechte’, 209.

<sup>846</sup> Schilling, *Revolution, Exil und Befreiung*, 275. Cf. Annegreth Schilling, ‘Between Context and Conflict: The ‘Boom’ of Latin American Protestantism in the Ecumenical Movement (1955-75)’, *Journal of Global History*, 13, 2 (2018) 274-293.

Further research is needed on the reception of the WCC's new human rights agenda among its member churches, but it seems clear that it percolated through the ecumenical movement. The WCC thus stimulated Christians to participate in a variety of ways in the social movements that rose to prominence in the years following '1968'. Moreover, the influence of the WCC's radical approach to human rights extended well beyond its member churches. As James C. Kennedy notes, many ecumenically-minded Protestants during these years were attracted by secular organizations, such as Amnesty International, which 'could fire the moral imagination of active Protestants as much as any church-related body'.<sup>847</sup> The WCC's activities in the realm of human rights helped to pave the way for Christians (including those who lapsed, in these years of de-churching) to join Amnesty, an organization which in many ways embodied a secularized Christianity.<sup>848</sup> Such developments can be understood as part of what David Hollinger, in the American context, has described as the rise of 'post-Protestantism', by which ecumenical Protestants' encounter with and increasing openness towards diversity served for many as a 'halfway house' to secularism.<sup>849</sup> At the same time, as Reynolds has argued with respect to the 1950s and 1960s, this did not mean that those who remained within ecumenical organizations such as the WCC simply capitulated to secularism. Rather, they sought to act as mediators between political and theological concepts.<sup>850</sup> The theological efforts to establish Christian underpinnings for human rights mentioned in chapter 6 illustrate this: ecumenists sought to integrate human rights into their theological thinking and vice versa.

The WCC's function as a site where Christians articulated and negotiated their differences did not, however, keep the organization from pursuing a distinct political agenda – far from it. The new human rights agenda articulated under the auspices of the CCIA tied together humanitarian (or depoliticized) and political elements, while emphasizing the causal connection between the two. Human rights, with issues such as torture featuring most prominently, thus worked as the thin end of a wedge, by which the political agenda of the churches was to be widened into one that addressed questions of social justice, especially pertaining to the global South. Assumed in this new conception of human rights was that the churches were called to act against injustice. Christians were encouraged

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<sup>847</sup> Kennedy, 'Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationals', 306.

<sup>848</sup> See Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>849</sup> David A. Hollinger, 'After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity', *Journal of American History*, 98, 1 (2011) 21-48, on 46. See also P. Mackenzie Bok, 'To the Mountaintop Again: The Early Rawls and Post-Protestant Ethics in Postwar America', *Modern Intellectual History*, 14, 1 (2017) 153-185.

<sup>850</sup> Reynolds, 'Against the World', 419.

to listen to the voices of the oppressed on their own terms and take action to overcome ‘unjust structures’. Through the WCC’s direct support of church organizations resisting repression in Latin America, or its support to liberation movements in Southern Africa, or for calls for a New International Economic Order, the WCC’s Western constituency – still represented by a majority of delegates at its conferences – was engaged in a Christian form of what has been referred to (often derisively, though this is not how the term is intended here) as ‘Third Worldism’.<sup>851</sup> Though church activism was rather more sedate than the revolutionary models of the time – Cuba, China, North Vietnam – the WCC’s embrace of a theology of revolution and then liberation converged with socialist ideals (which some leaders, such as Julio de Santa Ana and Emilio Castro, explicitly embraced, while distancing themselves from state socialism along Soviet lines<sup>852</sup>).

There were limits to how far congregations were willing to follow the WCC’s new course, however, and these limits became more sharply pronounced as the radicalism of the years after 1968 faded. The humanitarian appeal of emblematic violations such as torture, which could count on widespread support, did not necessarily lead to acceptance of more contentious political positions, such as those to do with international economic structures, or of a politically outspoken role for the churches in the first place. In other words, framing social justice in terms of human rights was no panacea for galvanizing support across the WCC’s membership. As Kunter has noted, the turn to an understanding of Christian mission as social justice alienated many more conservative Western participants in the ecumenical movement.<sup>853</sup> Others have pointed out the growing gap between ecumenical leaders and their congregants in the United States in particular, where evangelicalism experienced a lasting surge while ecumenical Protestantism lost its authority.<sup>854</sup> James Kennedy has argued that the WCC’s inability ‘to maintain a “transcendent” spiritual authority in the midst of growing rifts over the place of churches in international civil society’ was one reason for a decline in its importance during from these years onward.<sup>855</sup> Cold War tensions, evidenced most clearly in chapter 1, as well as North-South tensions, illustrated in chapter 6, brought such rifts into the foreground. Moreover, as Kennedy argues, ongoing secularization and, more importantly still, the

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<sup>851</sup> Robert Gildea, James Mark, and Niek Pas, ‘European Radicals and the “Third World”’, *Cultural and Social History*, 8, 4 (2011) 449-471.

<sup>852</sup> Schilling, ‘Between Context and Conflict’, 291.

<sup>853</sup> Kunter, ‘Christianity, Human Rights’, 144. Cf. Reynolds, ‘Against the World’, 25.

<sup>854</sup> Zubovich, ‘The Global Gospel’, 230.

<sup>855</sup> Kennedy, ‘Protestant Ecclesiastical Internationals’, 297.

process of ‘congregationalization’, which led Christians to bypass the WCC in favour of ‘more diffuse international networks’, further reduced the salience of the WCC.<sup>856</sup>

To those for whom the WCC’s approach went too far, an organization like Amnesty, which appealed to many precisely because of its sharply circumscribed approach to human rights, offered an alternative.<sup>857</sup> The WCC’s agonistic approach to human rights and social justice, which was of a more politically determined and demanding nature, could not but lead part of its constituency to reject it. The cautionary note sounded by José Zalaquett – a key contact in Chile after the coup, but now a leading figure in Amnesty – in 1981 illustrated this problem well, from the viewpoint of a liberal, consensus-oriented conception of human rights: ‘The key problem is that the human rights movement by definition tends towards the enforcement of a consensus, and hence can enter the conflicts involved in the arduous process of enlarging the consensus only at the risk of negating itself.’<sup>858</sup> The CCIA in the 1970s was aware of this tension, but it was determined to press ahead anyway, because it accepted conflict as inherent in the process of authentic Christian witness, understood as ‘costly discipleship’.

The CCIA’s attempt at expanding the concept of human rights to include social, economic, and collective rights speaks to a wider question about the nature of human rights in the 1970s. As Mark Engler has written, ‘[a]lthough the assertion of a broad range of system-oriented, second and third-generation rights is an innovative strategy for challenging the limits of traditional liberal conceptions of human rights, it remains uncertain whether the category of “rights” can bear the burden of this move’.<sup>859</sup> Even the CCIA in the latter half of the 1970s seemed ambivalent on this conceptual issue, given the relative scarcity of appeals to social, economic, and collective rights, though this may in part be explained by the lack of means of enforcing such rights and the limited moral traction they enjoyed among a wider (Western) public. A major problem faced by all actors promoting social, economic and collective rights at this time was these rights’ association with authoritarianism. As Burke’s work on the United Nations around the 1970s has shown, in practice, the politics of collective rights, such as those of the NIEO, were all too often entangled with postcolonial

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<sup>856</sup> Ibid., 307-314.

<sup>857</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) ch. 4.

<sup>858</sup> José Zalaquett, ‘The human rights issue and the human rights movement: characterization, evaluation, propositions’, *CCLA Background Information*, no. 3 (1981) 41.

<sup>859</sup> Mark Engler, ‘Toward the “Rights of the Poor”: Human Rights in Liberation Theology’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 28, 3 (2000) 339-365, on 357-358.

dictatorships.<sup>860</sup> Burke has thus written that in the 1970s there were ‘two poles’ in human rights advocacy, one of which was exemplified by Amnesty, the other by the ‘New Internationalism’, exemplified by calls for a ‘New International Economic Order’ (NIEO). In Burke’s view, the latter ‘drifted to grand impersonal structures and high abstractions, all of which were to enhance sovereign power to “do good” (a questionable proposition, given the authoritarianism of its chief proponents) and to create the conditions under which human rights would be realized’.<sup>861</sup> The WCC can be understood as charting a course between these two poles: it sought to address the structural causes of injustice while steering clear of the NIEO’s authoritarian tendencies. But given its emphasis on the ‘root causes’ of human rights violations, the WCC’s agenda during the 1970s represented a much more politically radical view than that associated with the ‘breakthrough’ of minimalist human rights.<sup>862</sup> The history of the WCC’s human rights engagement thus highlights the diversity of human rights discourse in the 1970s, while at the same it raises the question of how or to what extent human rights could be reshaped into a tool for social justice.<sup>863</sup>

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<sup>860</sup> See e.g. Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Roland Burke, ‘Some Rights Are More Equal Than Others: The Third World and the Transformation of Economic and Social Rights’, *Humanity*, 3, 3 (2012) 427-48; Roland Burke, ‘Competing for the Last Utopia?: The NIEO, Human Rights, and the World Conference for the International Women’s Year, Mexico City, June 1975’, *Humanity*, 6, 1 (2015) 47-61.

<sup>861</sup> Roland Burke, ‘The Internationalism of Human Rights’, in Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 287-314, on 311.

<sup>862</sup> Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

<sup>863</sup> Cf. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ‘Human rights and history’, *Past and Present*, 232, 2 (2016) 279-310; Samuel Moyn, ‘The End of Human Rights History’, *Past and Present*, 233, 1 (2016) 307-322. On the history of human rights and inequality, see Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018); cf. Julia Dehm, ‘Righting Inequality: Human Right Responses to Economic Inequality in the United Nations’, unpublished draft paper on file with the author.

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